

Lock-out can and must be defeated

LIVERPOOL dockers, firefighters and council care workers are taking action in defence of jobs and trade union rights.

As 2,000 marched in solidarity through the city centre in a demonstration organised at three days' notice by the dockers, the embarrassed Merseyside Development Agency quietly withdrew its £500,000 advertising campaign.

Aimed at encouraging new companies to invest in the region, the advertising posters sported pictures of Liverpool footballers Rushton and Fowler with the words 'Only two strikers!'

A measure of the mood in Liverpool is the response of the 1,600 firefighters to the Fire Brigade letter asking: 'Are you working normally?' There were three replies. One said 'I'm on strike', another said 'I'm on my annual holiday, leave me alone' and the third was abusive.

The firefighters know that if they fail to defend today's proposed cuts they will not be in a position to prevent the massive cuts being prepared for tomorrow. The employers' real target is to break the Fire Brigades Union as a major part of that preparation.

The striking UNISON workers in the Council's residential homes are standing up for the rights of the elderly and sick people who depend on them.

And the principled defence of trade unionism for which the dockers have been locked out are at the heart of the other two actions. They refused to cross a picket line put up by 80 of their workmates against sackings for opposing forced redundancies and casual labour.

Sacked

Now all 500 have been sacked, their jobs are advertised and they are asked to apply for them on the basis that it means signing individual contracts. That would mean:

■ No union, cuts in wages, casual part-time labour.

■ Shop stewards, health and safety reps and all active trade unionists would be left outside the gate.

The lock-out can and must be defeated!

The Transport and General Workers Union could break the anti-union laws by mobilising the full strength of the union in a strike to defend the dockers and break the lock-out.

MERSEYSIDE SUPPORTS DOCKERS

BY DOT GIBSON

No doubt there will be threats that such action could mean that the union funds will be sequestered. But failure to take up the fight for that reason in 1989 led to victimisations, mass redundancies, slave-labour contracts and de-recognition of the union in Tilbury and other ports.

In Liverpool, the dockers managed to maintain their union organisation, and it is up to every member of the union and the members of every other union to defend that.

Strength

The strength of the movement building up in Liverpool is that workers are gaining confidence in themselves. This is not because they have yet inflicted defeats on the employers and the government, but because there is a growing realisation that the Tory government is in deep crisis and workers' self-defence can be turned into an offensive against it.

All scab appeals that the slave-labour contracts should be signed and the shop stewards sacrificed in the name of working for and waiting for a Labour victory in a general election must be treated with the contempt they deserve. The Liverpool dock shop stewards are leaders in the workers' movement. Tory Blair is not worth a light in comparison.

He has already said that a Labour government will not repeal the anti-union laws. He has assured the Confederation of British Industry that a Labour government will not support so-called trade union restrictive practices like the National Dock Labour Scheme.

An offensive now will strengthen the fight for socialism against Blair and his team.

Dockers' Support Groups must be built throughout Liverpool on every housing estate and in every workplace, and in every town and workplace throughout the country.

Milosevic's murder gangs make war on children

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

BOYS as young as ten may have been butchered by Serb gangs operating in north-west Bosnia last week. The youngsters were among 1,000 Bosnian men reported missing after Serb forces led by the Belgrade gangster 'Arkan' drove thousands of people from their homes, before a US-brokered cease-fire was due to take effect.

Arkan's murder gangs were armed and trained by Serbian President Milosevic's security police, and his government must take responsibility for their crimes.

About 4,000 women, children and elderly men were herded through forests and minefields, and over the river Velika Usora to reach Bosnian lines. They came from Bosanski Novi, Prijedor and Sanski Most.

It was expected that up to 8,000 more people would be driven out the same way.

'These are extremely brutal expulsions,' said an officer of the UN High Commission for Refugees. 'Most of these people are in shock. They were made to swim a river, and some have drowned or died of exhaustion. The men were separated from their families and are missing. We fear the worst.'

Refugees said they thought the menfolk might have been taken to concentration camps around Sanski Most and Prijedor,

where many Muslims were murdered by Serb Chetniks in 1992. The International War Crimes Tribunal described the Serb actions there as genocide.

Arkan, real name Zeliko Raznjatovic, is a wealthy racketeer wanted by Interpol but protected by President Milosevic's government in Serbia, whose dirty work he has carried out at home and abroad.

His so-called 'Tigers' or Serb Volunteer Guard, were responsible for massacres at Vukovar, in Croatia, as well as in Bosnia earlier in the war.

They were also sent into Srebrenica and Zepa, where as many as 8,000 people were murdered after the 'safe havens' fell to Serb forces in June.

A conference sponsored by Workers Press

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See report page 7

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Workers Press

No Asians need apply . . .

USUALLY a paper's editorial expresses its opinion and comments on an important event or development. This week, however, we present a series of facts and raise some screamingly obvious questions.

* * * * *

FIRST, the facts:

■ Conservative MP Alan Howarth was welcomed into the arms of the Labour Party last week.

■ In Manchester and Bradford, men and women of Asian origin who have applied to join the Labour Party have received back nothing from its HQ in Walworth Road except a letter asking them to say 'why should you be accepted into the Labour Party'.

'Did Alan Howarth get one of these bloody letters?', asked one of these Asian workers.

■ At this week's Conservative Party conference in Blackpool, delegates were handed special leaflets and Labour Party membership forms by a team ensconced in the Savoy Hotel and headed by shadow environment secretary Frank Dobson.

'It's welcome aboard time,' Dobson declared. 'It's open house to all Tories. We have membership forms for the Labour Party here and they're invited to fill them in. We may have to vet cabinet ministers more closely than other delegates, but I say to any Conservative who wants to wander down the promenade: I am here.'

■ Only one week before, Labour's National Executive Committee disqualified Liz Davies from standing for parliament, purely on the grounds of her socialist opinions. This was a slap in the face to the North-East Leeds Constituency Labour Party that had endorsed her as their parliamentary candidate.

■ Howarth's prospects look decidedly more rosy. Labour's rule book says you must be in the party two years before you can be a candidate. But Howarth wants a constituency at the next general election — less than two years away. But fear not!

'Labour officials said last night that the party's NEC had the power to override the usual rules "in the interests of the party" and could allow Mr Howarth to become a candidate,' reported 'The Times' last Tuesday.

■ Back in London, an industrial tribunal had before it the case of 55 black and Asian workers who had been dismissed by Brent's Tory council. The 55 are among 2,000 made redundant by the council. They claim there was unfair dismissal because of their race or sex and because they were in trade unions.

The lawyer putting the Tory council's case eulogised the job-cutters and explained that until 1991 when the Tories were elected the benefits service had been a 'shambles'.

'Within two years . . . Brent had achieved a charter mark for excellence in 1994,' she went on.

'The transformation of the service was only achieved after a radical restructure . . . a root and branch reform carried out with a determination to ensure that Brent would never again find itself in the shameful position it had been in in 1992.'

What's this got to do with Labour? This £200,000-a-year advocate was none other than Cherie Booth, a.k.a. Mrs Tony Blair. She was 'only doing her job', she explained. What could be fairer?

Somehow Mike Custance, in court on behalf of the public service union UNISON, didn't see it that way: 'I'm sure Cherie Blair can pick and choose the jobs she wants. I simply cannot understand how the wife of a Labour leader can take a job representing a Tory employer which is sacking workers.'

■ Finally, a supertanker of sugar to help the New Labour medicine go down. Tate & Lyle were among the latest of the big firms to swell Labour's coffers. Their Tory donation was cut from £22,500 last year to £15,000 to finance their £7,500 Labour sweetener.

The axeing of Clause Four was a factor in the board's decision to give Labour some dosh. In the early 1950s, this same company carried out a campaign against Labour's threat to nationalise them.

* * * * *

'WHERE is the Labour Party going?' This has been a persistent question for the past two years in Workers Press. These latest answers must pull us all up sharp and make more urgent our next question: 'What kind of new party does the working class need?'

In the lead-up to the 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference next February (see front page for details), we ask that everyone addresses this question and sends in reports, letters, views, photographs, discussion. There is no time to lose!

Letters

In defence of the internet

BY AN amusing irony, I have never seen in print my letter to which George Angus so voluminously replies (Letters, 7 October).

The old-fashioned labour-intensive methods used by Workers Press to get their papers delivered broke down. If I did not have my electronic copy I would not be in a position to deal with his comments.

And dealing with such a jumble as the editor accepted is far from an easy matter.

Perhaps a line has gone missing from George's first paragraph? If not, can somebody please explain to me who or what is 'unco good' and why George can have a right laugh at it/them by calling himself Sabot? Or perhaps

George's quill pen ran dry in mid-rant and he had no spellcheck system available?

Next George refers to a few far-right web pages he knows about. Can anybody understand if he draws any conclusion from his discoveries? I can't.

I think that revolutionaries ought to monitor the work and statements of the far right. George seems to think that mentioning them, makes some point. Perhaps he is suggesting that because the far right has been known to use typewriters, workers should not lay a finger on a keyboard.

If George is unemployed, as he implies, of course I regret that. But I don't understand how that bears on the question of whether workers' organisations can make good use of the internet.

George goes on to complain that most files he finds on the internet contain ideas he thinks

are silly (in fact he uses language which Trotsky opposed in 'On the struggle for cultured speech'). Is the same not true of bookshops, libraries, newspapers, television? Should workers not therefore turn their backs on these 'motley farrago[s] of ephemera'?

George is right to be concerned that many workers may not have access to electronic communications (if I have understood him correctly), but does not respond to this difficulty as a revolutionary can be expected to — by formulating demands.

The nationalisation of telecoms, cable and some hardware firms could put every home and every phone-box on the internet, at a trivially small cost. The technology could be built into the typical domestic television for not much more.

In advance of that stage, terminals can be provided in public libraries or other public or com-

munity facilities (such systems exist in several US cities, usually under the name of Freenet).

And trade union offices are increasingly making use of communications technology — ram and-file workers should ensure that they have access in every branch to the same information resources as the bureaucracy.

In conclusion, George claims that he can easily read the complete works of Marx and Engels in book form, so he has no need access to electronic files. May be so — I guess that depends on George's style of working.

The current series of the 'Collected Works' of Marx and Engels published by Lawrence Wishart, is now priced at £40 per volume. Tot up the total cost of your abacus, George, and compare it with the price of a decent system.

J. Plant
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Bosnia

Another massacre committed by Karadzic's forces

From MIRZA MUKIC
Independent journalist
Bosna Est, Tuzla

USING weapons prohibited by international conventions, Karadzic's Chetniks killed 10 and wounded 47 people in a refugee settlement at Zivinice.

The refugees from Srebrenica were not saved from further killing after their exodus from their home town, which was declared a 'safe haven' then 'safe area' and finally occupied by rebel Serbs Chetnik forces led by Ratko Mladic.

On Sunday, 8 September, 5 adults and 5 children were killed and 47 wounded (16 children), when the refugee settlement at Zivinice, about 11 miles south-east of Tuzla, was shelled with cluster bombs.

These are not the final figures. Doctors from Tuzla believe the death toll will be increased as some of the injuries are very serious.

Two days before commencement of the 60-day ceasefire, Karadzic's Chetniks showed their real nature, firing from heavy guns at the refugees' settlement where hundreds of people were out in the open enjoying the sunshine, unusual for this time of year.

The international community has again

seen pictures of massacre. The ceasefire must be implemented, it says, in spite of innocent victims.

'The ceasefire will come into force,' said Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, 'provided the other side accepts proposals on Sarajevo and Gorazde.'

Regarding this massacre, it is quite clear that we are not fighting against an army, but against the worst kind of terrorism and the most brutal terrorists who, when they can't make moves in the battlefield, shell refugees' settlements where there are no military targets at all.'

Tuzla and Bosnians are mourning again, but we have been encouraged by the international sympathy and help via numerous humanitarian organisations dealing with refugees.

While writing this article, I got news that Banovici was being shelled but fortunately there are fewer casualties — 'only a few civilians' have been wounded. It remains to be seen if this crime — committed two days before the enforcement of the ceasefire — is Karadzic's extremists cynically seizing their 'last chance' to complete their programme of 'ethnic cleansing' or a declaration that they will ignore ceasefire agreements and carry on the slaughter of civilians.

Translated by Faruk Ibrahimovic

Workers Aid convoy obstructed by official racism

THE Bradford Workers Aid for Bosnia Convoy is meeting frustrating and deliberate obstruction from various authorities on aid mission to the trade unions in Tuzla.

In Slovenia, they were stopped at the border for 14 hours, and on entry to Croatia there was another six-hour delay.

In Split, they had to wait yet another five days for their papers despite the fact that they were all in order to be cleared. The final and most frustrating delay came on Sunday when the Mostar police took the seven Asian members of the convoy into 'custody' to check their passports — all of which are British.

This blatant racism held up the convoy for another six tense hours and as a consequence they missed customs clearance on Friday and were further delayed over the weekend.

The Mostar police then informed convoy members that their safety could not be guaranteed and they were forced to turn back 40km to the Croatia/Bosnian Croat-controlled border.

Workers Aid for Bosnia secretary Bernard Myers criticised these delays as deliberate and systematic obstruction by those holding up the vitally needed aid bound for Tuzla.

Bosnia — Solidarity not Charity

An account of the August Tuzla Trade Union convoy
Produced by Tony Samphier, NUJ delegate on the convoy

Published by Workers Aid for Bosnia
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Memorial meeting for Maire O'Shea

Irish republican, communist and fighter

Speaker: Bernadette McAlliskey

Saturday 18 November, 2pm-4pm (to be followed by a social)

At the Mechanics' Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1

(opposite Chorlton Street bus station, side entrance)

Maire O'Shea died on 6 March 1995. She represented a tradition of Irish republicanism that was both radical and secular. Her active struggle for a united Ireland made her reject all deals with the British state. Maire became nationally known in this country when she was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and charged with conspiracy. After a major campaign, which was supported by her trade union and in which she repeated her politics to the jury in court, Maire was acquitted.

Irish politics, the politics for a free and united Ireland, were central to Maire's life. However she was a fighter against injustice wherever she saw it and she saw it everywhere. In particular her professional life as a psychiatrist was also deeply political. For many years she fought against a system that defines and drives people mad and then imprisons them for life in top-security mental hospitals. She understood the connections between racism and mental health and established in Birmingham a therapeutic centre for black people. In Manchester she offered her professional help to black people hounded and distressed by immigration laws.

Maire was a supporter of all struggles by working people and was an active member of her own union ASTMS (MSF).

► Come to the memorial meeting. Honour Maire O'Shea and discuss how we can take forward those causes for which she fought.

Organised by the Maire O'Shea Memorial Committee, c/o 1 Newton Street, Department 95, Manchester M1 1HW.

There is also a memorial concert being organised by the Troops Out Movement at 8pm, 16 September at the Trade Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham.

Liverpool goes on the offensive

Merseyside workers are on the offensive. Dockers, firefighters and council carers are on strike. Other workers in the area are rallying to their cause. DOT GIBSON gives some background to their struggles

Firefighters strike for jobs and services

MERSEYSIDE firefighters have voted for a series of 24-hour strikes in defence of jobs and services.

The first one will be on 18 October, when the FBU will have a national demonstration in Harrogate, the venue of the Chief Fire Officers' Conference. The Merseyside area of the FBU has booked 40 buses to take members there.

The firefighters joined the 7 September demonstration in Liverpool organised by the dockers and Nick Navaro, the FBU Merseyside area secretary, spoke at the meeting.

Already the firefighters have had eight nine-hour strikes spread over all shifts. A mass meeting of 1,200 members voted

unanimously to escalate strike action. Then 81 per cent of the membership took part in a ballot, which resulted in 1,160 voting 'yes' and 127 voting 'no' — 90 per cent of the vote in favour of 24-hour strikes.

'This represented a strengthening of our resolve to see this fight through,' said Mike Lawson, striking firefighter and member of the FBU national executive committee. 'The ballot for the nine-hour strikes had 81 per cent in favour.'

The FBU is taking action against the decision of the Fire Brigade to cut the number of firefighters by 20 and increase the working days of the rest by three days a year.

There are principles

involved,' said Lawson. 'At great expense the union's auditors went through the Merseyside Brigade's books and pointed out where savings could be made without cutting services. But they are not interested. They have a hidden agenda. They want to smash the union in advance of future massive cuts.'

The Chief Fire Officer has sent round the 90-day redundancy notice, and a letter to the firefighters individually asking whether they are working normally. But all intimidation has failed. Only one senior manager has scabbed. Every other senior manager joins the strike days.

'ACAS is not applicable,' said Lawson. 'What kind of settlement would they expect? Ten sackings instead of 20? The latest offer is that we agree to the reduction in staff, and they cut the number of fire engines in the region so that the remaining firefighters don't have to do extra work! So much for their service to the community.'

Dockers action solid against lock-out

LIVERPOOL dockers are now fighting a lock-out.

Their action started on 28 September in defence of 80 of their workmates sacked by Torside Limited.

On 9 September, the 420 dockers employed by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, together with the 80 Torside dockers and 12 from Nelson Freight, tried to return to work on legal advice from their union, the Transport and General Workers.

On the same day the dockers received P45s through the post; the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company advertised their jobs in the local paper stipulating that any applicant must agree to work

alongside part-time casual workers.

In an attempt to break the dockers' solidarity, 200 of them received individual contracts and telephone calls from personnel managers urging them to sign.

Acceptance of these contracts would mean agreement to: no union, a cut in wages and casual, part-time labour.

Shop steward and TGWU general executive council member, Mike Carden said: 'The action is solid. There is huge support from the people of Liverpool. At three days' notice 2,000 marched through the city on 7 September, and at the meeting which followed there were speakers from the Fire Brigade Union and

UNSON, both involved in strikes.'

The three Liverpool Labour MPs, Eddie Loyden, Bob Parry and Joe Benton are giving support to the dockers, and MEP Ken Stewart is demanding that all European grants to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company are withdrawn (see 'Capital v labour on the Mersey', this page).

While the dockers are organising to defend the union and their jobs, not one word could be squeezed out of TGWU general secretary Bill Morris.

Like his predecessor, Ron Todd in 1989, Morris is looking for a way to get the problem off his back, scared stiff that the government will invoke the law and sequester union funds.

Carers out for eight weeks

CARERS at Liverpool city council residential centres have been on strike for eight weeks to defend national agreements.

One of the strikers, Stephen McCarthy, told Workers Press that the strike centred on two main issues: 'sleep-in' payments and casualisation.

Casualisation is the main threat to the residential service in Liverpool. The Labour city council has set up a casual in-house pool. Workers in the pool only get paid when they work and get no holiday or sick pay.

On the basis of these moves, one residential centre has been closed and all the others are under threat.

The 'sleep-in' payments are an allowance for the inconvenience of having to stay at the residential centres overnight when off duty, with the stress that can involve.

Under national agreements, these payments continue when staff are off sick and on annual leave.

Now Liverpool's Labour city council want to make 'savings' and cut carers' pay by between £500 and £2,400 by dropping the 'sleep-in' allowance when they're sick or on holiday.

The residential centres cover three sectors: child, mental health, and adults with learning difficulties.

Capital v labour on the Mersey

In 1970 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board engineered a financial collapse that resulted in its bankruptcy.

The government appointed three senior directors to oversee restructuring of the new company, acquiring a 'golden share' of 20 per cent, giving the government a controlling interest. Thus taxpayers' money was used to float the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

In 1987, shares leapt from 31p to £2.80, and at their peak hit £4.60 — a rise in the year on share

prices alone of 803 per cent!

In a conspiracy to break the union and smash the dockers' rights to permanent employment with guaranteed wages, the government abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme in May 1989 and ensured that the port employers had the funds to carry out a war against the dockers.

£112 million of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's loans were written off by the government and over £200 million of taxpayers' money was spent in redundancy payments to

cut the docks' workforce.

With abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme the government sold its 20 per cent share option.

According to a Department of Trade letter (5 October 1995) the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company sold 7 per cent of the government's share option to buy the port of Medway in 1993.

With Euro and City Challenge grants, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company boasted that their port development plans would provide a further 9,000 to

23,000 jobs on Merseyside. But for the company to have access to such funds has led to a further steady rise in share prices.

Nothing could be clearer. Ten years ago 6,000 dockers worked in Liverpool.

Dockers and their families are victimised and put on the dole queues while public money is pumped into the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and the shareholders make millions.

The sacked dockers demand a public inquiry into the functioning of the company.

All work and no play damages your health

THE British economy is depressed, with unemployment, but the workforce is suffering from depression through overwork. Long hours and stress are causing sickness, and may drive people into an early grave.

Half the country's workforce is depressed by increased stress in their jobs, a survey by NOP for Granada television's World in Action revealed last week.

One in three people are working longer hours than they want to, and half are not being paid overtime for longer hours. Workers are being driven by fear of unemployment, the survey reported.

Professor Cary Cooper, occupational psychologist at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), said a third of Britain's £11 billion sick leave bill last year was stress-related. It is a time bomb in our society and we are going to pay for it.

Last month the Department of Health pulped copies of a government-funded report by Professor Cooper, 'Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace'. It didn't like a

sentence which said 'Research has shown that working more than 48 hours a week doubles the risk of coronary heart disease'.

The Department said it didn't want to give the impression this represented the government's views. In December the government is bringing a case to the European Court, arguing that it should not have to apply EU restrictions on working hours because they are not a health and safety issue.

The MSF union, which obtained a leaked copy of the Cooper report, said it should be published, and the government should drop its court case. MSF general secretary Roger Lyons said 100,000 employees working more than 48 hours a week died each year from heart disease.

Of 1,003 full-time workers interviewed for last week's World in Action, 63 per cent felt they were under more stress at work than five years ago. As a result, 44 per cent said, they had trouble sleeping, 26 per cent drank more because of work worries, and 22 per cent smoked more. Sixty per cent said they were

exhausted at the end of the working day, and 56 per cent said they did not have enough time for family or personal relationships. Almost a third thought things would get worse in the next couple of years, and 58 per cent said the main reason for working harder was fear of losing their jobs.

■ ASTHMA affects everybody regardless of class, 'but the lower your social class the more severe it is likely to be,' the National Asthma Campaign reported last week.

More than three million people, more than half of them children, suffer from the disease in Britain. Many children, particularly from poorer homes, do not get the right medicines.

More than a third of adults with severe asthma are unemployed, often due to the disease. But because they are poor they cannot afford special treatments, bedding or nebulisers to control symptoms.

'It's a catch 22 situation, really,' said a spokesperson for the campaign.

Labour gives Murdoch green light on information superhighway

BY COLIN PENDLETON

MULTI-billion media tycoon Rupert Murdoch could expand his empire in Britain through Labour's promised information highway pact with British Telecom.

Murdoch-owned companies like BSkyB and 20th Century Fox would move in to provide online services once a Labour government removed restrictions on British Telecom.

At present, BT is not allowed to broadcast entertainment over the telephone network, and has been prevented from entering the optical-fibre cable market in an attempt to encourage competition.

Labour leader Tony Blair announced at the party conference in Brighton that his government would remove restrictions, in return for BT setting up free connections to the 'information super-highway' for schools, hospitals and libraries.

The pact proposal has been welcomed by former Tory trade minister Norman Tebbit, a non-executive director of BT. But officials at OfTel, the telecommunications regulatory body, said

Labour had not consulted them about its plans.

British Telecom chair Sir Iain Vallance met Rupert Murdoch in June after BT's 20 per cent-owned US company MCI Communications announced it was buying a 13.5 per cent stake in Murdoch's News Corporation. But BT denies the two held several meetings before Blair announced his proposed pact.

Labour MP John Austin Walker criticised a government white paper in August, saying it was handing Murdoch's BSkyB domination of digital terrestrial

television. He said the company had already used its dominance in UK satellite television and encryption to keep out other programme makers.

Tony Blair's flight to Australia in July to meet Murdoch and his executives came as a blow to many Labour supporters and trade unionists who know the media magnate as a bitter enemy.

But with Labour's abandonment of Clause IV and any plans to renationalise telecommunications, it seems the Labour leaders are opening the info-highway for Murdoch's profit juggernaut.

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Criminal signs

S Bosnians unearth the mass graves victims of Serb-fascist barbarism, and more reports come of atrocities by Croat forces, many people remain sceptical whether the war criminals will be brought to justice.

Leave aside controversy over the World War II career in Bosnia of former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim. Two of the biggest murderers in World War II Yugoslavia, though convicted in absentia, escaped to live out their days in comfort.

Ante Pavelic, the Poglavnik (fuhrer) of the Nazi stogee state in Croatia, whose Ustashe killers shocked even German military commanders by their savagery, was helped by the Vatican and the Western Allies' 'rat-line' to get away to Argentina. Many of his followers who made it to America and Australia have since turned.

Father **Momcilo Dujic** was an orthodox priest, Chetnik leader, and Nazi collaborator. His bandits massacred 1,327 people in the Knin region. He went to live in California, from where he continued to take a leading part in Serb-émigré politics.

In 1989, Dujic promoted Vojislav Seselj, now leader of the Serbian Radical Party, as *vojvoda*, Chetnik like. ('Vojvoda Seselj, unifier of the Serbs', reported a London Serb paper).

Seselj's Chetniks operating in Croatia and Bosnia are called the 'White Eagles', the same name used by the youth movement of Dimitrije Ljotic's pre-war Serb fascist party. 'Tigers', the other notorious 'ethnic cleansing' gang, are more properly called the Serb Volunteer Guard, same name as Ljotic's militia.)

Some 'left-wing' writers keep mentioning the *sahovnica*, the red-and-white chequerboard 'Ustashe symbol resurrected by Tudjman's regime'. It was used in Croatia centuries ago, and a Bosnian friend whose family moved to Zagreb when he was young reported it being stamped on their papers in 1969, when Croatia was still part of 'socialist Yugoslavia'.

While we're on heraldic matters, those of you who watched episode three of the BBC 2 series 'The Death of Yugoslavia' will have seen Seselj's party flag, bearing a black cross in the corners of which are four Cyrillic letters. They stand for 'Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava', 'Only Unity Saves the Serbs'. The same symbol was used by General Nedic's pro-Nazi regime in Serbia during World War II.

Another Bosnian friend swears he recognised the same kind of cross on the headgear of a Serb Orthodox priest photographed among the assembled wealthy parasites at that week royal wedding in London this summer.

I certainly saw it recently myself on a London Underground train. Whether by coincidence, the design of my opponent, or the enthusiasm of a Chetnik supporter, it was scrawled on the Central Line map right by where you'd get off for the Serb Formation Centre.

Sounds familiar?

WAG-waving patriotism; proclaiming 'partnership' for government, employers, and workers' organisations; proposing to clear the unfit off the streets. Dining with the anti-industry proprietor and editor of the *Daily Mail*.

This would not be the first time that a Labour leader has won the support of a Rothermere and his newspapers, observed a historically-minded *Guardian* letter-writer (7 October).

It happened when a Labour cabinet minister named Oswald Mosley set up the New Party. This later became the British Union of Fascists.

Charlie Pottins

Milestones in the Yugo

This is the first in a series of articles by CHARLIE POTTINS on some aspects of the history of Yugoslavia during World War II

WITH the capture of Jajce by Bosnian Croat forces a few weeks ago, yet another historic place-name took on a different role. Jajce was the capital of the medieval Bosnian kingdom, long before Vrhbosna grew into a major city and changed its name to Sarajevo.

Besieged in the 15th century alternately by Hungarians and Ottoman Turks, it held out against the latter until 1527. What its fate will be now, amid battles and diplomatic manoeuvres, we will see.

But like Bihac to the north-west, and Foca on the Drina river to the east, Jajce was also a milestone in the Yugoslav national-liberation war against the Nazis.

After the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, and the rescue of King Peter and his ministers by the British, two rival guerrilla armies were set up.

Those under Royalist Army officer Draza Mihailovic, looking to the exile government in London, became known as Chetniks, a Serb traditional name.

Those formed by the Communist Party, headed by the Croat-Slovene, Josip Broz, alias 'Tito', became the partisans. Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union the party central committee had decided on 4 July 1941 to appeal for armed struggle, and on 12 July an uprising was launched in Montenegro.

In Croatia, the Nazis let a bunch of fanatical nationalists, the Ustashe, set up their own stogee fascist state backed by the Catholic Church.

The Ustashe regime pursued a genocidal campaign against Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. Hundreds of thousands were slaughtered in the Ustashe-run concentration camp at Jasenovac.

But the Ustashe were not the Nazis' only collaborators in Yugoslavia. A puppet regime was installed in Serbia, headed by former Belgrade police chief Milan Acimovic, and from August 1941 by General Milan Nedic, who'd been minister of Defence in the Yugoslav kingdom before the war.

Dimitrije Ljotic, whose Zbor movement had been Nazi-backed since 1935, set up a military Volunteer Corps, whose business was to hunt down partisans, Jews and Gypsies. Police commissioner Svetozar Vujkovic ran the Banjica concentration camp in Belgrade, and across the Sava river the Sajmiste camp was staffed by Serb police in collaboration with the Gestapo.

Prominent clerics in the Serb Orthodox Church preached against resistance, and denounced the Jews. By August 1942 the Nazi administrator for Serbia was boasting that the country's 'Jewish question' had been solved.

Some 90 per cent of Serbia's Jewish population was exterminated. In September 1943 General Nedic paid an official state visit to Berlin to discuss plans for a Greater Serbia with Hitler.

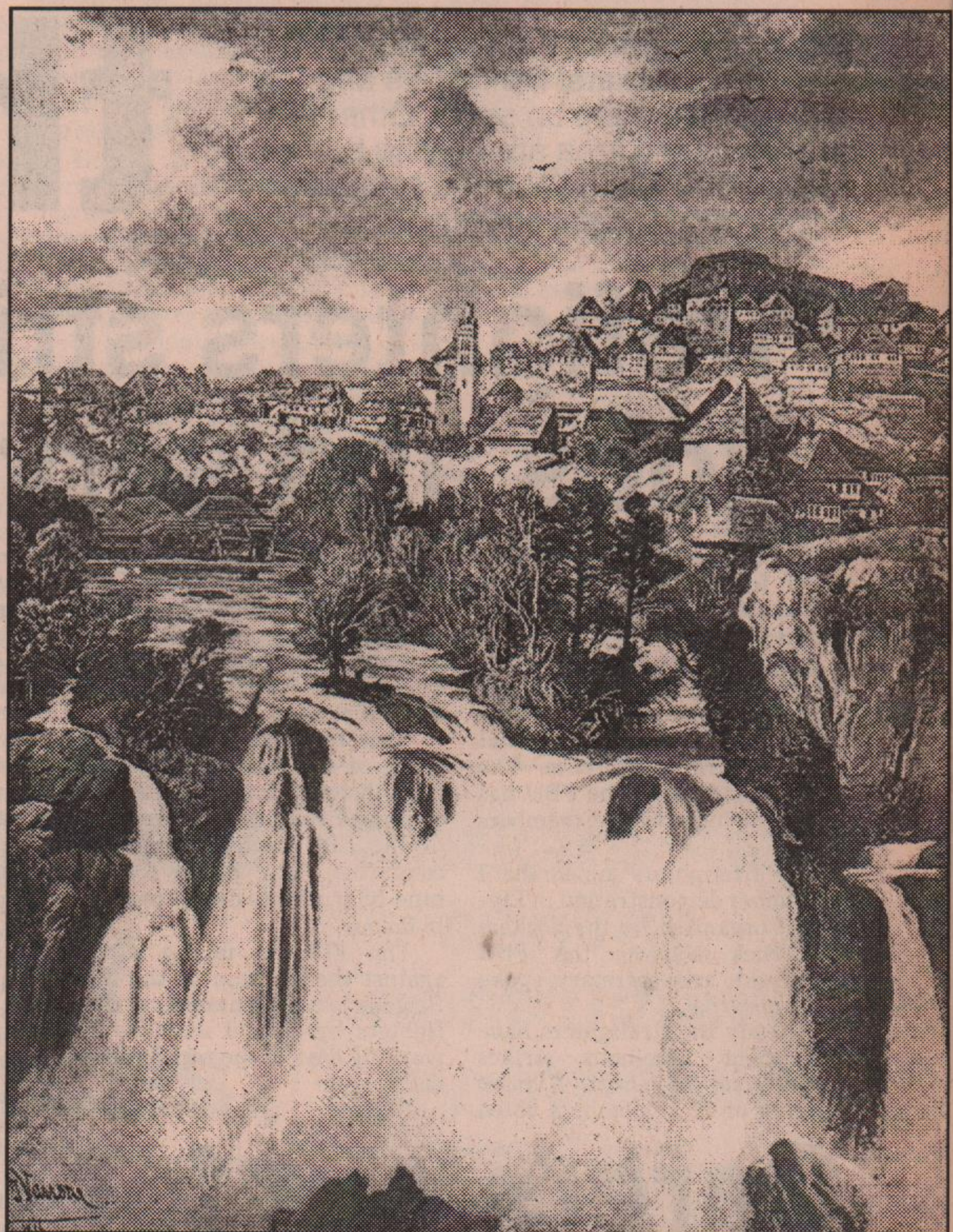
In September 1941, the partisans had established a liberated territory around Uzice, in western Serbia, with people's committees, courts, and schools.

Some Royalist funds were discovered, a small-arms factory in the town was put to work, and the paper *Borba* published three times weekly. Tito met Mihailovic and negotiated an alliance, but there were clashes between their followers.

Reprisal

In October 1941, in reprisal for the ambush of a German column, in which 26 of their troops were killed, the Nazis rounded up and murdered thousands of men and boys in the towns of Kragujevac and Kraljevo, in Serbia. The population were shocked, and Mihailovic drew back from the partisans, allowing some of his units to join forces with General Nedic, as the best way of assuring Serbia's interests.

Within the national war, civil war broke out between Chetnik and partisan. On 29 November 1941, as two German divisions advanced on Uzice, the partisans began evacuating the town, retreating over the



Sketch of Jajce, the last medieval capital of Bosnia

mountains southwards to the Sandjak.

On 21 December, following a Communist Party central committee meeting at Nova Varos, the First Proletarian Brigade was formed: 1,200 partisans equipped with automatic weapons. These brigades, though not strictly working-class in composition, were mainly party or communist youth members.

Unlike territorial units, they were full-time partisans, prepared to fight anywhere in Yugoslavia. The date chosen was Stalin's birthday, but the Russian leader was not too pleased by the present. He wanted a diversion on the Germans' southern flank,

not talk of proletarian revolution to frighten his Western allies!

From the Sandzac, the partisan army crossed into eastern Bosnia, establishing its new headquarters at Foca, on the upper Drina. 'Happy the nation without history'; Foca had already had a bit too much.

In the spring of 1941, the Ustashe, whose German-backed 'NDH' state had swallowed the whole of Bosnia, occupied Foca and slaughtered hundreds of Serbs. The Ustashe force included some Muslims.

Then the Serb nationalists, the Chetniks, took the town and, led by a Russian émigré Major Mikailovich, butchered thousands of Muslims.

The partisans in eastern Bosnia had been in alliance with the Chetniks. According to Milovan Djilas, they tried to restrain them from punishing all Croats and Muslims, but the Chetnik commanders 'believed in the higher nationalist aim of exterminating the Muslims' (*Wartime*, p.140).

In February 1942, the Chetnik commander in eastern Bosnia, Jezdimir Dangic, negotiated in Belgrade for Nedic's Vichy-style regime to annex the whole of eastern Bosnia. The Germans agreed, but the Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic, and Germany's Hungarian allies opposed the move.

Expansion

Nevertheless, Stevan Moljec, a Serb lawyer from Banja Luka and Chetnik political leader advocated Serbian expansion westward to Dalmatia, and 'the cleansing of the land of all non-Serb elements'.

Taking over Foca, the partisans found a cowed, half-starved town, and tried to breathe some life back into it. People saw that the partisan army was different, genuinely committed to uniting all Yugoslav peoples. It had already recruited some Muslims, and in Foca formed a Muslim youth unit.

It was also in Foca that Mose Pijade drafted ideas for people's liberation committees, and Arso Jovanovic wrote the statute of the proletarian brigades.

'The proletarian people's liberation shock brigades are the military



Yugoslav revolution

shock formations of the peoples of Yugoslavia under the leadership of the Communist Party, their statutes said.

Tito had appealed to the Soviet Union for arms and medical supplies. Pijade spent 37 nights on Mount Durmitor waiting for a promised air drop that never came. But plenty of advice came.

On 5 March 1942, the Yugoslav party received this message from Moscow: 'Study of all the information you give leads one to the impression that the adherents of Great Britain and the Yugoslav government have some justification in suspecting the partisan movement of acquiring a communist character, and aiming at the Sovietisation of Yugoslavia.'

'Why for example did you need to form a special proletarian brigade? Surely at the present moment the basic, immediate task is to unite all anti-Nazi currents, smash the invaders and achieve national liberation.'

Tito protested that the Chetniks were collaborating with the fascists and attacking his forces. There must be some 'misunderstanding', Moscow replied.

'How is one to explain the fact that supporters of Great Britain are succeeding in forming armed units against the partisan detachments? Are there really no other Yugoslav patriots — apart from the communists and communist sympathisers — with whom you could join in common struggle against the invaders?'

Georgi Dimitrov, as head of the Comintern, advised Tito: 'Remember that the Soviet Union has relations based on treaties with the king and government of Yugoslavia, and that an openly hostile attitude towards them would provoke new difficulties for the common war effort, and the relationship between the Soviet Union, Britain and America.'

Communist Party meetings in Foca and Montenegro resolved not to let the enemy 'provoke us into class

war', and stressed national unity. But there was no let-up from the forces ranged against them, either militarily or politically.

Djilas was to recall: 'Though in May 1942 we scoffed at Mihailovic's claim that the Yugoslav Communists were Trotskyites because they didn't listen to Moscow, the suspicion was born in us that not only was this diabolical brew concocted by the British Secret Service, but that Moscow knew of it and chose to ignore it' (*Wartime*, p.144).

At the end of May 1942, the partisans were forced to abandon Foca. Breaking through enemy lines, they marched across Bosnia. They sabotaged the railway from Sarajevo to the coast, headed north-west — Gornji Vakuf and Kupres — and on 3 November captured Bihac. On the way they had lost many wounded but gained new recruits, growing to 150,000-strong.

In August 1942, the Royal Yugoslav legation in Moscow had been raised to embassy status. In a message to the Comintern, Tito asked: 'Can nothing be done to better inform the Soviet government of the traitorous role of the Yugoslav government and of the superhuman sufferings and hardships of our people, who are fighting against the invaders, the Chetniks, the Ustashi, etc? Don't you believe what we are telling you daily?' (quoted in *Wartime*, p.199).

Delegates

At Bihac, the Anti-Fascist Council for National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) assembled, on 26 November, with delegates from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, and Dr Ivan Ribar, a respected pre-war parliamentarian, as president.

It passed resolutions on equality of nations, on respect for private property, and promising free elections after the war. With large areas of Bosnia and Dalmatia in partisan

hands, Tito felt emboldened to establish a regular National Liberation Army and have AVNOJ set up an executive committee — Moscow objected to calling it a government.

In December 1942, there were youth and women's congresses in Bihac. Muslims had been joining the partisans in Zenica, Hercegovina and elsewhere, and the Eighth Regional (Muslim) Brigade was formed, commanded by Osman Karabegovic.

A regional Anti-Fascist National Council for Bosnia in 1943 spoke of 'the Serb, Croat and Muslim peoples'. The national AVNOJ, meeting in Jajce that year, was not convinced Muslims were a nation, but agreed that Bosnia should be a republic inhabited 'by parts of the Serb and Croat nations, as well as by Bosnian Muslims'.

Partisan divisions were heading towards Montenegro and southern Serbia when the Germans launched an all-out offensive in January 1943 to drive Tito's forces out of north-west Bosnia.

They brought up tanks, heavy artillery and planes, and bombed fleeing refugees. Destroying bridges behind them, the partisans fought their way through Italian and Chetnik forces, southwards through Prozor, then across the Neretva river and on to Montenegro.

At Mt Durmitor, Tito received his first British military mission, a Captain Deakin parachuting in to report for Churchill.

The partisans were nearly surrounded by a new German offensive. But with the Italian surrender in September 1943, and the Allies' decision to help Tito's partisans, the tide turned. (Some Italians joined the partisans — there is a memorial in Split to their 'Garibaldi division'.)

By July 1943, the main partisan army was established on Mt Vlasica, in central Bosnia. In September, the 16th Muslim Brigade was formed.

By November, the partisans had captured the old capital of Jajce, where the Yugoslav Communist Party central committee was installed in the crypt of an old Bogumil monastery, not so much for identification with the heretical Bosnian sect as for protection from German air raids.

On 6 November, they held a rally celebrating the anniversary of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, something they hadn't been able to do legally in Yugoslavia even before the war.

On 29 November, the second session of AVNOJ met in Jajce, and decided to proclaim itself the supreme legislative and executive body in Yugoslavia, setting up a provisional government, with Tito as marshal and acting prime minister.

It also decided to forbid the king to return, pending post-war elections — not that the party leaders were in any doubt what would be decided after the war. But there were still big battles to be fought, and not only against the Germans and the Ustashi.

The Chetniks were regathering their forces in Serbia, and massing opponents. There were suspicions that, while recognising partisan success in the west of Yugoslavia, Churchill would let the Royalists keep Serbia.

Moscow broadcast news of the Jajce assembly, but left out the bit about the king. Meanwhile, one of the oddest episodes in the Yugoslav struggle, and in Bosnian history, had taken place at a small town called Villefranche-de-Rouerge in the south of France.

My next article will deal with this.

City Lights

What price Le Franc Fort?

HOW long can the axis of the European Monetary System survive?

Last week's decision by the Bank of France to turn the screw on monetary policy in order to preserve the value of the French franc epitomised the crisis now facing not merely Jacques Chirac's battered regime but, more significantly, monetary order in Western Europe. But whether the Chirac regime can hold the franc line is becoming ever more doubtful.

If the franc is forced into a devaluation, a vital bow — perhaps a fatal one — will have been struck against monetary union in Europe.

The Bank of France's move was taken in anticipation of last week's strike by 5 million public sector workers — the first by this group for the last decade — against a government-imposed pay freeze.

Schools, libraries, museums, courts, post offices, administrative centres and the Paris Metro were brought to an almost total halt by the strike.

In France the public sector is far more decisive than in Britain. Almost one in four work for the government, compared with under one in five in Britain and under one in seven in the United States.

According to the latest Economic Co-operation and Development report, government expenditure in the public sector accounts for just under 51 per cent of France's GDP.

Public sector wages alone account for 40 per cent of government spending. It is claimed by the opponents of the government that an extra 370,000 public sector jobs were created by the de-centralisation of the 1980s. Yet the Paris-based bureaucracy remains as large as ever, they complain.

THE government-imposed pay freeze arises from the need of the French ruling class to drastically cut public spending if they are to come anywhere near meeting the requirements of a single European currency as decided under the Maastricht treaty.

Such requirements involve, among other things, a drastic cut in government expenditure, one which the Chirac regime is far from achieving.

To enter a common currency system the government will have to slash its total budget deficit to 3 per cent of the Gross National Product by 1997, from the present share of more than 5 per cent.

The challenge is enormous. It not simply involves reducing the budget deficit by at least 10 per cent in each of the next two years and halving the deficit on the social security budget in 1996 before wiping it out the following year. It also requires the biggest revolution for 50 years in France's welfare-system funding.

The strike has been called not simply on questions of wages. There is widespread fear that if government workers do not stand firm there will be a concerted move against their pension rights.

The government wants simultane-

ously to increase the contribution rates paid by government workers and reduce their benefit levels, as they have already done in the private sector.

THE employers are increasingly dissatisfied with the progress that the government is making in putting its financial house in order. The president of the Patronat employers' association accused the government of cowardice in confronting the level of government spending.

Juppé's plea that he has tried to reduce military spending has cut little ice and his adversaries point out that the total wage bill for the civil service and public sector will grow by 3.32 per cent over the coming year.

The strikers are angry because of the 2 per cent increase in VAT and increased social security contributions. Behind the strike also lies the fear that the government is about to speed up the deregulation of France Telecom, Electricité de France, Gaz de France and the SNCF railways. This would certainly mean considerable 'downsizing' — that is sackings.

The unions are also opposed to any radical change in the social security system, especially on the part of the union federation Force Ouvrière, who at present jointly administer the scheme with the employers.

IT IS a close run thing whether the crisis of the French government is greater than that of the Tories.

With his poll ratings plunging, Prime Minister Alain Juppé is at the centre of a political scandal. He is accused of having used his previous position as deputy mayor of Paris to house himself and his family lavishly and cheaply at the city's expense.

After weeks of delay Juppé promised to move himself and his family out of the flats. But he remains under the threat of legal investigation, although the cynic on the streets of Paris believes it will never come to that.

If it did — and precedent was observed — he would be forced to resign his office and thereby create a full-blown government crisis.

IN LATE August, the volatile Alain Madelin, a staunch free-marketeer and widely known as the Thatcher of France, left the government and his replacement as finance minister, Jean Arthuis, is now at odds with Juppé over whether to continue a special government subsidy to car buyers.

In the event, despite his claims to be a stern opponent of excess government spending, Juppé got his way and the subsidy was kept.

Juppé's housing difficulties are but the tip of the of the sleaze iceberg. There have been a wave of judicial probes into the corruption at the heart of France's leading companies.

After being put under formal charges of corruption, Pierre Suard had to leave the company Actuel — and he is only one of a dozen or so business chiefs currently being investigated by the magistrates. But most of these chiefs are still safely in charge of their companies.

Altogether Juppé seems to be faced with a choice. He either gives up the struggle to meet the German-imposed requirements for a single European currency, with all that implies for the integrity of European politics and economics. Or he battles it out with the working class, with all the dangers that this involves. Either way, there is but trouble ahead.

Threadneedle



Partisan brigade marches towards Prozor, March 1943

I had a dream

PERSONAL COLUMN

WATCHING the early evening news on television a week last Tuesday, I imagined Tony Blair's dismay and fury at being squeezed out of top billing, literally at the last minute, by the O.J. Simpson verdict.

And, after all, what's the use of making your Big Conference Speech, chock-full of hollow flatulent phrases and Union Jackery, with your Cherie goggling at you all dewy-eyed, and Harold Wilson's relict looking as if she wasn't quite sure where or if she was — what's the use of all that, I say, if you find your prime publicity spot spatchcocked between the end of one murder trial and the beginning of another?

But all was not lost. Newlabour's smoothly professional spin doctors were soon on the job. The result: on the BBC's nine o'clock news Tony Blair now had pride of place.

What a political wizard he is turning out to be! This amazing fellow declares his 'admiration' for Lady Thatcher; cosies up to Rupert Murdoch; makes a deal with British Telecom, neatly packaged as a Conference bombshell; has that half-tamed polecat Norman Tebbit eating out of his hand; and lays down the law to the BBC as if he were already prime minister.

And now Sir David English, chairman of Associated Newspapers, no less — that's the outfit which publishes the right-wing *Daily Mail* — is openly flirting with the idea of supporting Blair in the next general election.

In last week's *Spectator*, Sir David revealed:

That for 'several years' — since the days when Neil Kinnock led the Labour Party, in fact — Blair has been a 'regular' guest in the Associated Newspapers dining-room;

That Blair had told him that 'the welfare state has got to be radically reformed'; and

That English recently had a conversation with his top boss Lord Rothermere which he reports in the following terms:

[M]using aloud about the unthinkable over a lunch with Lord Rothermere this week, I tried to visualise how our editorials might read should we support Blair in the next election.

"Could such a thing even be possible?" I wondered.

"Well, it certainly would not be impossible, David", he replied, *having recently come from a two-hour one-to-one with the Labour leader* [emphasis added].

"So, could Associated Newspapers come out for Labour? It is too early to say. We may or we may not. But, if we do, remember — you read it here first."

There's an old saying: 'Who sups with the devil should have a long spoon.'

Seventy-one years ago this month, it was the *Daily Mail* which led the way in publicising, just before polling day in the 1924 general election, the forged Zinoviev letter — a stunt that helped bring down Britain's first Labour government.

And 61 years ago, during the heyday of Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, with its Union Jacks and its 'New Britain' rhetoric, an earlier Lord Rothermere caused the *Daily Mail* to blazon forth the headline: 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!'

So is it soon to be: 'Hurrah for the Blairites?' If so, remember — you read it here first.

AT SOME some point or other during that second bulletin last Tuesday week I dozed off. And with all those trials being reported, I dreamed that another trial was in progress.

Standing in the dock was Tony Blair. He stood charged with hijacking the Labour Party; installing himself as dictator, at the head of a 'centralised command structure leading directly to the Party leader'; driving socialists out of all positions,

including the list of parliamentary candidates; refusing to do away with anti-trade-union laws and leaving the working class bound hand and foot by those laws; declaring ruthless war on the poor and the homeless; hobnobbing with big business and its press barons, to prove that he can serve their interests better than the Tories can.

But the judges, in this dream trial, were not the bewigged puppets in fancy dress who administer bourgeois law on behalf of the ruling class, but a great army of working men and women — and children — from the past 200 years of the British labour movement.

Right at the back, in the far distance, were women chained to tubs, their hands and faces grimed with coal dust, and small children from the cotton mills, their arms and legs black and blue from the overseers' thrashings with billy-rollers when they fell asleep under the machines.

There was a man I took to be John Gast, secretary of the London shipwrights and founder in 1818 of the first trade union, the Philanthropic Hercules. At one side stood a great crowd of Chartists, and among them I noticed the diminutive figure of William Cuffay, black leader of the London Chartists, deported to Tasmania in 1848 for 'levying war on Queen Victoria'.

In the middle distance were 700 savagely exploited women workers from the Bryant and May match factory; and next to these were London dockers in rags, so hungry that they had fought each other for work at the dawn call-on, but learning humanity and solidarity through struggle.

In the foreground were rank-and-file members of Labour Party branches before World War I; pickets from the 1926 General Strike; gaunt hunger-marchers from the 1930s; miners from the 1984-85 strike; and many, many more.

This vast tribunal was listening in silence to Blair's speech in his defence. Their stern, set faces said, as plainly as words: 'Is this what we suffered and struggled for — so that you could sell us out?'

At this point I woke up. I didn't hear the verdict.

The working class of the 1990s has yet to deliver its verdict. Can that verdict be in doubt?

A royal grouse

FOLLOWING my notice of John Mathieson's forthcoming book of verse ('Salute to a "poor man's McGonagall"', 30 September), a reader has challenged me to try my hand at a versified comment of my own, on some topical event.

Never one to turn down a challenge, I proffer the following ode, à la Cyril Fletcher, on a recent incident at Balmoral:

*Out shooting near her Scottish house,
The Queen was hit by a falling grouse.
The royal shoulder was much bruised;
Her Majesty was not amused.
Said she: 'Since it's the Windsors' fate
To shoulder grave affairs of state,
Our regal shoulder should be spared
Collision with a bleeding bird.'*

I promise that this is the last piece of its kind I will smuggle into this column — unless it is greeted with popular acclaim, which is unlikely.

Peter Fryer

O.J. Simpson and bourgeois justice

NICK LEE goes right to the heart of the matter in this comment on the recent much-publicised criminal trial in the US

THE ACQUITTAL of black ex-football star and California playboy Orenthall James Simpson for the murder of his wife Nicole Brown-Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman was greeted with incredulity by the US's media.

That is to say, the white-dominated US media. According to an ABC News poll, while only 37 per cent of whites agreed with the verdict, 83 per cent of blacks supported acquittal.

Justice in tatters?

THE main reaction, echoed by large sections of the British media, was that Simpson was obviously guilty — who else did it if he didn't? Never mind the trial, the evidence was overwhelming.

As the *Guardian* put it: 'To most outside observers, the evidence presented in court by the prosecution looked overwhelming.'

In the words of Los Angeles district attorney Gil Garcetti, the verdict was 'based on emotion that overcame reason'.

Chief among the 'saboteurs of reason' was Johnny Cochran, leader of the defence 'dream team' of million-dollar lawyers.

Cochran is accused now of playing the 'race card' by linking the trial to the general oppression of blacks in America.

More specifically, he exposed very effectively the racist corruption of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) whose detectives — among them the racist perjurer Mark Fuhrman — handled the case.

This was a bit much for the *Guardian*, which, in an editorial headed 'American Justice in Tatters' (4 October) protested that 'Criminal trials should not be turned into a referendum on the

behaviour of the police — even a police service as racist as LA's.'

As if this had nothing to do with the reliability of the evidence!

Some British commentators even came near to suggesting that the very existence of defence lawyers undermined the process of justice! Thus Jonathan Friedland fumed:

'Only the megabucks super-lawyers of the defence could have ripped holes in what was essentially a strong case. By paying for the best experts, and simply out-resourcing the strapped prosecution, they were able to plant that key "reasonable doubt". But couldn't a team like that undermine even the strongest case?' (*Guardian*, 4 October).

The final element was to discredit the impartiality of the jury, or at least of its black members. The California Bar Association announced an investigation into the defence team, the most serious allegation being that the spouses or relatives of the nine black jurors were telephoned in an attempt to gain sympathy (*Guardian*, 7 October).

Meanwhile a black juror, Lionel Cryer, was criticised for giving a black power salute as he left the court, proof positive that the majority of black jurors were 'swayed' by the race issue.

Beyond reasonable doubt?

BUT in fact it wasn't only black jurors who were suspicious of the prosecution case.

The daughter of Anise Aschenback, one of the two white jurors, said that her mother had changed her mind about Simpson's guilt after the exposure of LAPD Detective Mark Fuhrman's racism: 'She told me he probably did do it but there was reasonable doubt.'

This goes to the heart of the matter. The jury in a criminal trial, in the US as in Britain, is not asked to decide if the defendant is innocent, but whether the pros-

ecution has proved its case 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

This is quite different from, for example, asserting that Simpson was guilty on the 'balance of probabilities', which is the criterion in a civil court action for damages. Simpson now faces just such a civil action from the family of the victim Ronald Goldman. But a civil court can't send him to prison or to death row.

So was there reasonable doubt? Was the prosecution evidence as overwhelming as it seemed?

The essence of the doubt in the jury's mind was that the famous 'bloody glove' found at the scene of the crime had Simpson's blood on it all right, but the ground around it was strangely clean.

Furthermore the glove had been 'found' by Detective Fuhrman, whom the defence exposed as a liar and an extreme racist with a record of fitting up blacks.

Fuhrman's colleague, Detective Vannatter, had returned to the scene of the crime taking with him — for no obvious reason — a tube of Simpson's blood from the police laboratory, and some of the blood was missing when the tube was returned.

True, there was other evidence that the prosecution chose not to bring to court. But given the emphasis placed on the glove and on Fuhrman's testimony, the jury could hardly be blamed for having doubts that the evidence before them was conclusive.

The fact is that had Simpson not been rich enough to afford such a skilled team of lawyers, it is unlikely that the racist conduct of LAPD would ever have been exposed — and the incredible cynicism of the prosecution in basing so much of their case on the testimony of a known race extremist and perjurer would have gone unchallenged.

In the trial's early stages Simpson's record as a violent husband focused attention on the issue of violence against women and the fact that in the US 3 million women are battered annually by their spouses and boyfriends, and thousands lose their lives.

But LAPD is no friend of bat-

tered women. Numerous calls go unanswered. Fuhrman himself is reportedly a founder-member of a group called 'Men Against Women'.

The neutral state?

WHAT angered the US ruling class — and their followers in the British media — was two things.

First, the spotlight has turned once again on police racism and violence. After Rodney King and the 1992 riots, the last thing the ruling class wanted was yet more confirmation that numerous high profile initiatives to 'reform' the LAPD have come to nothing.

Second, the myth of the bourgeois criminal justice system as in essence a neutral impartial mechanism for arriving at the truth had to be upheld.

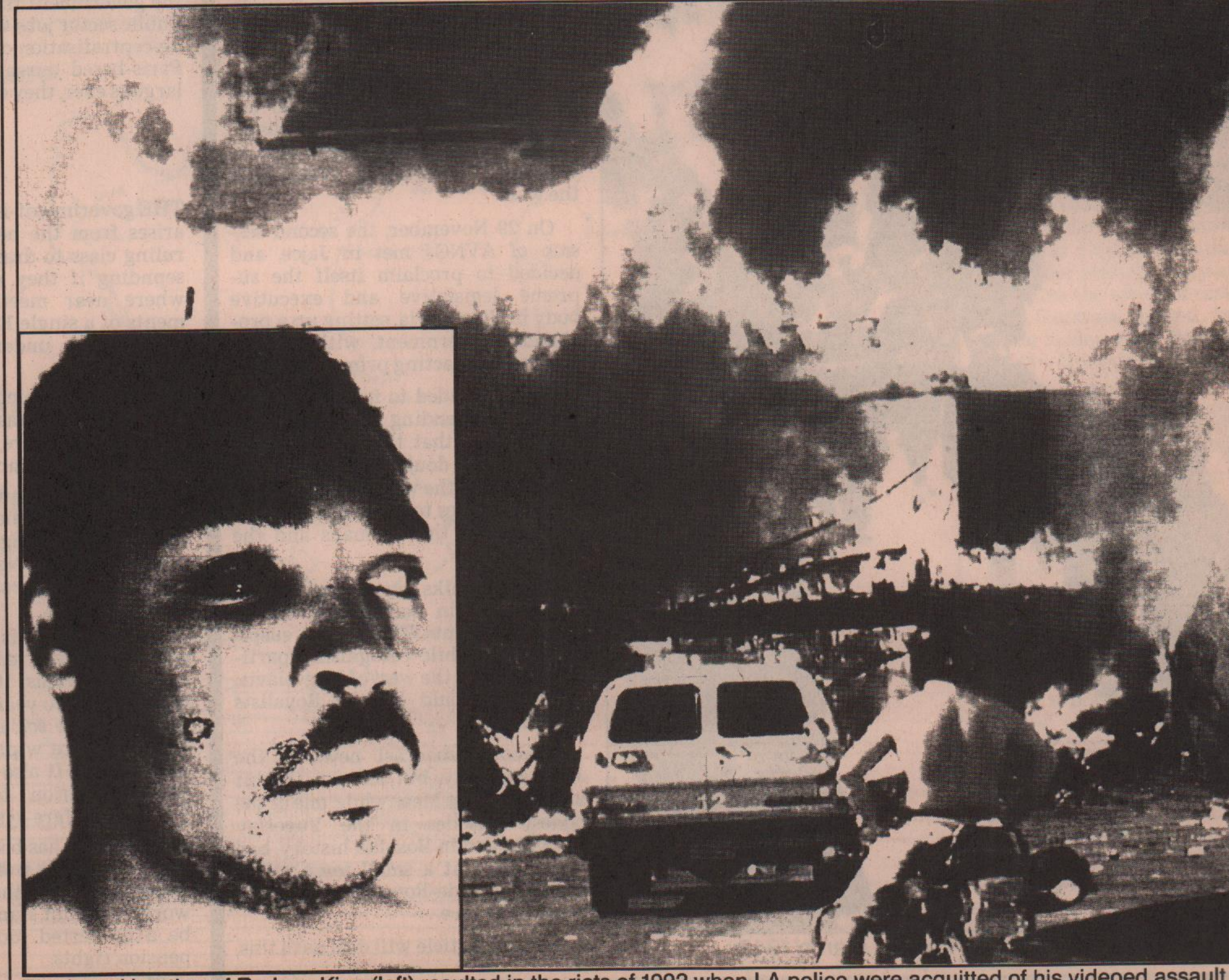
And the only way to uphold it in face of the corruption and cynicism of much of its own apparatus was to turn on those elements of the system which still represent the bourgeoisie's earlier gains in its historically progressive phase — the jury system and the right of the accused to mobilise his or her defence.

Across the US the right-wing, white-dominated media are now calling for 'toughening up' the criminal justice system; for restricting the right to silence, as has happened in Britain under the Criminal Justice Act; and for constraints on the activities of defence lawyers.

In cases such as O.J. Simpson, the fact that the jury were rightly suspicious of testimony from a racist police force, and suspicious of a prosecution case that rested so heavily on such testimony, will be turned on its head.

It will be used as 'evidence' of the weaknesses of the jury and adversarial trial process itself and the need to turn it in a more authoritarian direction.

As poverty, inequality and racist oppression grow ever wider throughout the capitalist world, the ruling class needs a tough criminal 'justice' system that it can rely on.



The brutal beating of Rodney King (left) resulted in the riots of 1992 when LA police were acquitted of his videoed assault

10th ANNIVERSARY MEETING

G. Healy's expulsion from the WRP

On 19 October 1985 G. Healy, leader for 25 years of the Workers Revolutionary Party and active member for 49 years of the Trotskyist movement, was expelled after charges under the party's constitution of:

- Sexual abuse of a whole series of party members;
 - Physical attacks on a number of party members;
 - Making false and unsubstantiated allegations against political opponents.
- He never appeared before the party to answer these charges.

The capitalist press tried to portray the expulsion of Healy as a matter of petty scandals and personal feuds. On the contrary: it concerned the morals and political principles which are at the very foundation of our communist beliefs, which aspire to a higher culture and a better way of life.

A meeting to mark the anniversary was held in London on 7 October 1995.

Liz Leicester, introducing the meeting, said it was part of an important but painful process.

Healy was a longstanding member of the party, which made his expulsion a traumatic experience, but it was vital to understand and analyse the party's history in order to move forward.

The WRP is now discussing the question of a new party, and this meeting, she explained, was part of that process.

Dave Temple was the first of many speakers who explained how they joined the Trotskyist movement, were inspired by big upsurges of the class struggle and wanted to fight for socialism.

It was a highly centralised party which insisted on Marxist theory, and he was grateful to the genuine Marxists in the party who had educated him.

He spoke of the achievements of the party since he joined in the 1960s, and of some of the huge mobilisations, especially the rallies of up to 10,000 in the early 1970s. He spoke of 1974 as a watershed, an opportunity for a base in the class. But workers could not live in the party.

Alongside this there was another side to the party's training. 'We were', he said, 'trapped by our own revolutionary aspirations into miseducation.'

After 1974 Healy had to claim there was a permanent revolutionary situation and refused to recognise any lull in the struggles of the working class.

He spoke of 1984-85 miners' strike and explained how the line of the party hindered the recruitment of miners.

The struggle to overthrow Healy was the key now to a new party in different circumstances, with the removal of Stalinism and the change within the Labour Party. Any new party, he stressed, must be a party workers can live in.

Dot Gibson spoke about the 'complex connection of personal lives, the party and the class struggle' in the so-called Healy experience. She described with detail that moved and disturbed the audience the regime and the responsibility that she and Aileen Jennings had had for Healy's well-being, and had expected to have for him in his old age.

Concentrating on Healy's paranoia, she described how his early outbursts of violent and vicious temper had seemed to have some reason. While he was surrounded by worker-comrades and comrades who had been in the movement for years, there was an overall stability.

One of Healy's strengths was

that he had always led from the front — travelling around the country, speaking to members, to workers, to young people. She had accompanied him many times to meetings in the aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the Khrushchev speech.

In later years, he became isolated from reality, less and less able to control his bouts of impatience and temper.

'Party members were completely taken up with the daily paper — its production, distribution, sales and finance. They were exhausted. He could no longer inspire them. All he could do was to convince others to keep the party on its toes.'

After years of kickings and ill-treatment, and scared of Healy's power, she and Aileen spent years piecing together information about what he had done, trying to

A message was read from Aileen Jennings

Just say hello to everyone — and tell them that as far as I am concerned I feel events in the last ten years on so many fronts have vindicated what we did in 1985. Although it has been far from easy, I have no regrets.

understand it and working out what to do.

The more he surrounded himself with people who believed that every word he uttered was a gem of wisdom, the worse it got. He appeared to be making firm choices, firm decisions, but he was plagued with doubts and hesitations. His insistence that party development was always onwards and upwards led to an increasingly unstable political, organisational and financial situation.

When in 1985 debts of £500,000 had amassed, five comrades prepared to take action against him, knowing there would be an almighty explosion.

'We began to understand his need for sexual gratification to maintain self-control. We learned that he had already imposed himself sexually on the young women currently in the leadership of the Young Socialists. The mother of one had tried to commit suicide.'

'We realised he was looking forward to a new group of young women arriving in London at the end of the Young Socialists' march through the coalfields at the end of the miners' strike.'

'It was then that we took action', Dot concluded, 'not knowing what the outcome would be.'

John Spencer said he had come to pay tribute to the comrades who had brought an intolerable situation to an end. 'Through their actions they liberated us

from a cult around Healy's person', he said.

He denounced the lie that the split was the work of police agents.

That accusation was a 'reflex action' for Healy, the 'Olympic level hater'. Spencer mentioned the cases of 'Blick-Jenkins, Alan Thornett, denounced as a police spy on the basis of a stolen letter, Joseph Hansen, target of the most elaborate political smear campaign in the history of Trotskyism; Tim Wohlforth, whose recent book describes very well his experience when his partner was smeared as an agent of the CIA.'

In 1990 the Redgraves' 'Marxist Party' has announced that MI5, MI6, the special branch, the CIA, BOSS and MOSSAD had split the WRP — and killed Healy. Ken Livingstone, who had supported the security services story, confessed a couple of years ago that there was no evidence for it.

Clare Cowen described the three alternatives considered when the small group of comrades decided action had to be taken against Healy. The first was a political struggle against the wrong policies of the party; the second was an exposure of the crazy, autocratic way Healy ran the party companies and finance; the third was an exposure of his sexual abuse of a large number of women comrades.

The first two were rejected because of Healy's long-standing skills which would enable him to outmanoeuvre his opponents.

The third alternative was chosen. 'We had to feel sure the party would respond. This [sexual abuse] was the central issue.'

A letter from Aileen Jennings was distributed to the political committee on 1 July 1985, exposing Healy's sexual liaisons with female party members. Events moved on

from there over the next few months.

'When the party membership heard of Healy's abuse, a huge wave of fury went through the organisation, and anger about other wrong policies came out in the open.'

After Healy's expulsion there was a struggle to understand the nature of sexual abuse, which is neither rape nor the feudal 'right of the first night'.

'Sexual abuse is an abuse of power, not a question of sexual gratification.'

Healy's abuse led to the destruction and loss of many comrades, from other countries as well as Britain.

In a sense all comrades in the party were abused. Clare Cowen paid tribute to the families and relationships that were damaged and broken up under Healy.

There was also racism in Healy, and this too reflected his degradation of culture and contempt for humanitarian, human issues.

'We could not be here today without Healy's expulsion on at least two counts: the party would certainly have had a wrong policy over Bosnia and we would not have grasped the humanitarian issues involved.'

Cliff Slaughter paid tribute to the handful of comrades who had worked to expose Healy and make possible a new start.

Many lessons remained to be

learned from the 1985 expulsion of Healy and his clique.

We can learn these lessons only from the standpoint of the situation in the class struggle and our tasks as they have come to develop since then.

But we do not exclude that some comrades who have not come with us in the WRP can shed light on what happened from their own point of view.

It was important to recognise, he said, that while many who were in the 1985 WRP have been able to rebuild lives that were severely damaged and endangered by Healy's rule, there are others who still struggle against the results of that damage. Mutual help is important.

'To those who say we should have known better', said Slaughter, 'I can only reply that they are right.'

The question that needed answering was how and why Healy could come to dominate and endanger the movement. The tendencies to paranoia and megalomania were in the early years warning signs, faults of an important leader in the war and post-war years of the Trotskyist movement; but they came to completely predominate, consuming the party.

Why? Without at all underestimating our own responsibility it must be said that this could only happen in the conditions imposed by the long domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Trotskyism was compelled to swim against the stream, in conditions of oppression, physical destruction, and the isolation imposed by Stalinism.

But, as always, cause and effect changed into each other. Healy's dominance in the party turned away many of the best comrades who could have led the fight out of isolation. Some have returned.

He disagreed with those who said the sexual abuse for which Healy was expelled was a secondary, 'non-political' question. The aim is not only revolution but socialism, the society of free individuals who have recovered mastery of their own creations, their own lives. The means to that end must be consistent with the end.

In the course of fighting to change society, people change themselves. A party in which the individual members are required to 'service' the centre, the leader, is not consistent with the nature of a revolutionary party.

We must understand 1985 better now, from the standpoint of 1995 and what has developed in the intervening years. Only now do we know that in 1985 the working class and the Fourth International stood on the very brink of the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

It was the tremors from the build-up of this volcanic eruption that we felt in 1985. The content of the struggle to put Healy out was the preparation for the opportunities and responsibilities of this new situation.

Stalinism is no more. There are fragments, but the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy means that the situation as a whole, and the nature and role of those fragments, is now qualitatively different. It is a new era for the working class, for Marxism, for the Fourth International.

These new opportunities mean that a new party must be brought into being. We do not mean a WRP writ large. We start from the fact that objectively the international working class, no longer held apart from Marxism and from its revolutionary role by Stalinism, and with a social democracy deprived of the Stalinist prop as well as of the pos-

Reports by Paul Day, Bridget Leach and Bob Towers

I welcome the organisation of this anniversary of a decisive turning point in the history of the Trotskyist movement. The break with Healy, the expulsion of him and his followers, was the only way to prevent the degeneration of the WRP with the consequence of betrayal of the working class. The deep-going and long drawn-out suffering (still continuing) resulting from Healy's treachery, violence and sexual abuse of members of the WRP was a prelude to the betrayal of the working class by the party which would have been its result. Only through the breaking of this treacherous, opportunist stranglehold could the Trotskyist movement ever take on its responsibility.

I welcomed the break with enthusiasm and hope that his crimes against the party and the working class will never be forgotten as the crimes of the Stalinist and social-democratic bureaucracies are not.

Dany Sylveire

sibility of dispensing a programme of reforms, now is compelled to regroup itself, reconstruct itself, for the revolutionary struggle for socialism. 1985 was the essential preparation for us to play our part in that reconstruction.

Simon Pirani spoke of the terrible destruction of comrades. 'This is not a British affair', he said, reflecting on the experiences of comrades in the audience from Iran, Iraq, India and Africa.

He explained how our experiences in dealing with Healy had helped us make connections with the comrades in SWAPO who took up a fight against abuse by their leaders, killings and abuse.

Cyril Smith paid tribute to the organisers of the meeting, which he described as a resumption of work on the nature of communism. Marx, he said, laid bare the real nature of humanity, that the proletariat's struggle would make possible a human society.

Bill Hunter said history was not just about good and bad, and pointed out Healy's important struggle for entry into the Labour Party. 'The Trotskyist movement has gone through a very contradictory existence', he said, 'because of the tremendous pressures and counter-revolutionary Stalinism.'

The five comrades acted in the only way they could to drive a way through the crisis, the depravity of Healy.

John Simmance said the expulsion of Healy was decisive for the party. It took us forward, and shows that a workers' movement, a revolutionary movement, has to be built.

Dave Bruce spoke of the political struggle against Healy, and explained that the question of sexual abuse was political.

'If the nature of a party regime isn't political, I don't know what is', he said. 'It's a central issue of the Stalinist and Trotskyist movements.'

He spoke of Healy's philosophy as a degeneration of thought, and of the way social relations in the party mirrored bourgeois society.

Robin Blick said that he and Mark Jenkins had pieced together a story of the party leadership which was confirmed by 1985. He described comrades being beaten at Healy's 'proletarian courts' at Socialist Labour League camps,

but said that he did not blame those who watched, as he too had defended violence against political opponents.

He tried to understand why comrades put up with the regime, concluding that it was not a Trotskyist movement. He now looks critically at the traditions of Bolshevism.

Stuart Carter said he still had a hatred for Healy because he saw hundreds of youth come and go because they couldn't live in that movement, but he said he did get Marxist education in the party, from Tom Kemp and others.

He pointed out that our initiatives on Workers Aid for Bosnia, and in the struggle against pit closures, would have been impossible without the expulsion of Healy.

Don Cuckson congratulated the principled, honest and politically courageous comrades of the WRP. He said it was vital for a revolutionary party to be able to deal with political dissent, and not to equate criticism with condemnation.

Dave Finch said that in spite of the degeneration, the party did do some good things, and took some principled stands. He said that Healy did not destroy that.

The lessons of the past must be learned for the party to turn outwards into a new party. 'The Workers Press must become much more a workers' paper', he said, 'intervening in the life of the working class.'

Terry Brotherstone, describing the meeting as one of the most important of the Trotskyist movement, reported that the WRP was establishing an archive of autobiographical material, and appealed to comrades to submit contributions on their own experiences.

There was, he said, no gloom in this meeting; it was a meeting about the future. But there is always a danger in just wanting to move on. We must deepen our understanding. This meeting, he concluded, is a beginning.

Closing the meeting, Liz Leicester said: 'Unlike Healy and his clique, every one of our members and leaders will go before the working class to explain our record, and why we expelled him. The political lessons must be drawn up and placed in front of the working class in Britain and internationally.'

There were two exciting periods for me: the time of the Khrushchev speech and Hungary in 1956 when I played a leading part in recruiting Communist Party members into the Trotskyist movement; and activity in the labour movement in Leeds when I spoke to meetings of 1,000 miners and their families in a successful rent struggle in which the Trotskyist movement made its mark. The 1985 events started for me when I was asked to take part with the comrades already involved. I realised we were re-establishing the fight for Marxism, Bolshevism and the Fourth International!

Norman Harding

General strike against French government

THE 10 October general strike paralysed France. For the first time since 1986, all trade union federations of state employees called for a day of action.

Post office, railway and transport workers, teachers, nurses, civil servants, revenue staff, air traffic controllers, seafarers were all involved.

In the Paris demonstration on last Tuesday's general strike, one post office worker told us: 'The discussion in my sorting office was very quick. We hate this government. Enough is enough.'

Another post office worker added: 'We are opposed to privatisation of the post office.'

From the independent postal union, SUD-PTT, to the big federations under the influence of what's left of the Communist Party or the Socialist Party, came a united call for strike action. All agreed to protest against the Chirac-Juppé government's offensive against the public sector.

'What is at stake is the introduction of a two-speed health service,' said one nurse. 'A good

From JANOS BOROVI in Paris

one for the rich and a bad one for the poor.'

Chirac came to office last spring with demagogic slogans of fighting 'social disintegration', unemployment, etc. The 'new' government, following hot on the heels of the previous Mitterrand-Balladur government, immediately started its attacks on workers to reduce the budget deficit and get France ready to meet the Maastricht European monetary union targets.

Not only have taxes been massively increased, a campaign has been launched against the right to have a permanent job, for 'flexibility' in work practices, against the health service, against immigrants.

Public service workers have come under the hammer of the media, the newspapers, television.

They have been denounced as 'privileged' because they have guaranteed jobs. Currently, it is still difficult to sack a state employee.

Also under attack are the state workers' pension scheme and Prime Minister Juppé has announced a pay freeze in the public sector for 1996.

This attack on so-called 'privileges' is the spearhead for a general attack on the working class, the exploited, the low paid, the unemployed, the young, the old.

The united 10 October strike was the first positive response to these provocations. But, even

during the presidential election campaign last spring, an unheard of breaking of the traditional 'electoral social truce' occurred in France with youth and workers launching an offensive in the factories and on the streets to defend jobs and wages, to defend immigrant and ethnic minority rights, to fight fascism and racism, etc.

And now the trade union bureaucracies have been forced to respond to the pressure of the rank-and-file and call a united day of action.

But they don't want a real fight against the government. There was no real preparation of the action to mobilise and centralise the fight.

The union leaders did not organise any committees to prepare the strike. And they didn't propose any future action.

'We know this is another strike without any future,' said one teacher. 'The leaders did not make any real preparations, but we come out in force because

we've had enough of this government.'

For these leaders the strike wasn't to stop the government in its tracks. They merely wanted to prepare a rotten compromise.

Just before the strike, feelings among workers were contradictory.

Everyone was happy that there was a kind of trade union unity but there is a deep mistrust of the leadership and their manoeuvres. Many said that there would just be the strike and nothing else.

But the strike has been a real success. First estimates suggested that the majority of the 5 million public sector workers went on strike and that there were more than 100 demonstrations around the country mobilising several hundreds of thousands of people.

These successes were not due to the trade union leaders.

It was the result of a real hatred of the Chirac-Juppé team and a real desire to stop their

attacks. This is only a couple of months after the elections and now 65 per cent of France's population is dissatisfied with the government.

What is needed is a perspective and a programme of action to unite all workers: in the public services, in industry, employed and unemployed, ethnic minorities, etc. Without this perspective the trade union bureaucracies will be able to use the formidable energy of the strike for their own anti-working-class interests.

In the coming weeks an appeal is to be published for a 'new party' of the working class from different revolutionary and socialist currents and activists. One of the first tasks of these currently limited forces will be to organise a discussion — in the factories, in the unions, in the communities, etc. — on what sort of programme and organisation is needed to draw the conclusions from the general strike and on how to make the 'next step'.

Who came out in France

BY GEOFF PILLING

FIVE millions strikers brought large areas of France's public services to a halt as they took part in the country's biggest strike since 1986.

Services from trains, the underground system, buses, post offices, schools and hospitals were badly hit as workers took action in opposition to a government-imposed wage freeze.

The right-wing government that came into office in May has promised massive cuts in state spending to prepare France to meet the criterion needed to enter into the European common currency arrangements.

Initially the strike was intended to cover only central government civil servants, but employers of France's state owned companies including Air France, the state railway company and car manufacturer Renault took part.

Workers fear the effects of the privatisation of these industries

on jobs, conditions and wages. Last month a report from the OECD instructed the French government to speed up its privatisation programme.

The French railway company SNCF said that most international train services due to leave Paris were halted along with three-quarters of the domestic timetable.

Hundreds of channel tunnel passengers were hit as the operators of Eurostar were forced to cancel four out of the ten London to Paris trains. Three Paris to London trains were also halted by the strike action.

But car drivers took some consolation from police action. The police refused to issue parking tickets or to read meters.

Instead, as a sign of their discontent with the Juppé government they issued 'penalty-free' tickets.

They read 'Police officers are discouraged. The situation is worsening and police increasingly find themselves helpless observers of the rise of crime.'

Filipina woman still facing death

BY ROSS COOPER

SARAH Balabagan, a 16-year-old Filipina housemaid sentenced to death in Abu Dhabi, had her appeal adjourned by an Islamic court last week.

Sarah was only 14 when she killed her employer, an elderly man who she claims tried to rape her. After questioning her again about the stabbing, and her insistence that she acted in self-defence, the three judges decided to adjourn her appeal until 30 October.

More than a dozen women have been executed in the pro-imperialist Gulf oil states in recent years, most of them in Saudi Arabia, and usually by beheading with a sword.

Zahra Habib Mansur, 40, from Awjam in eastern Saudi Arabia, was arrested with her husband on the Saudi-Jordanian border in 1989. Zahra, a Shia Muslim, had a photograph of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in her luggage. Amnesty International says the couple were taken to a detention centre, where Zahra was tortured to death by Saudi security police three days later.

Leonarda Akula, a Filipina alleged to have murdered her employer and his family, was dragged out of prison onto a public square in Dammam, a Saudi coast town, on 7 May 1993. She was forced to kneel on the ground, and the executioner tore off her headscarf and decapitated her with a sword.

Fatima bint Abdullah, a Saudi,

was beheaded on 27 March this year, for allegedly running a brothel, and for chewing qat leaves. The following month Sithi Mohammed Farouq, aged 19, was executed by firing squad in Ras al-Khaymah, United Arab Emirates. Alleged to have killed her employers' child, she had told fellow-prisoners she didn't do it.

On 11 August this year a Saudi mother and daughter were beheaded in front of an all-male audience in a Dhahran market, for allegedly killing the older woman's husband.

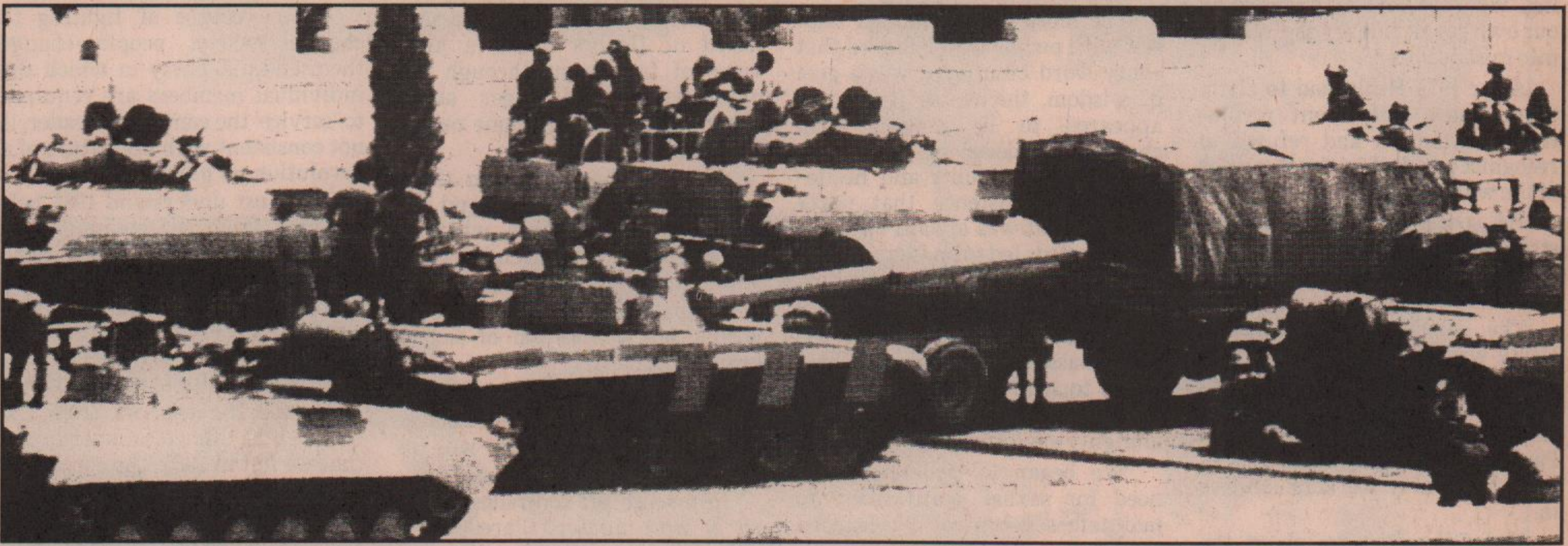
A fortnight later Rabi bint Mohammed bin Hamed, a Nigerian woman, was beheaded by the Saudis for alleged trafficking in cocaine.

Del Ferouza Delaur, from Pakistan, was beheaded in Jeddah for

alleged heroin smuggling, on 25 September.

This year there have been 182 public executions in Saudi Arabia and many floggings of foreign workers. Robert Fisk in the 'Independent' (9 October) said Islamic trials and cruel executions 'call into question the morality of the West's military and political support for Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states whose supposedly civilised values were defended by 500,000 US, British and other Western troops after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.'

'Not a single Western embassy, however, is known to have protested at the beheading of women — nor at the increasingly ferocious lashing of hundreds of foreign female workers in the Gulf for alleged misdemeanours.'



Iraqi tanks in Kuwait: Western governments don't protest beheadings of foreign workers carried out by Gulf states

Indonesian union leader visits Britain

FREED Indonesian union leader Muchtar Pakpahan was in London last week as the guest of British trade unions and the anti-censorship organisation Article 19, after being cleared of all charges by his country's Supreme Court.

Pakpahan, general secretary of the Indonesian Workers Prosperity Union (SBSI), was sentenced to three years

imprisonment in November 1994, for 'inciting workers'. This followed the mass strikes and demonstrations in the tobacco industry in Medan, Sumatra, when hundreds of workers were arrested, and several trade unionists jailed for normal union activity, such as producing leaflets.

There was a fresh wave of strikes in Indonesia this Summer,

over wage demands, union rights and military interference. Thousands of women workers from the Great River Industries garment factory, which produces for top brand names like Benetton marched on parliament to press their demands.

They wanted increased pay, housing subsidies, and an end to deductions for the state-backed SPSI union. The Centre for

Indonesian Workers Struggle and the Indonesian Student Solidarity Front for Democracy supported the strike.

The government had intervened to increase Pakpahan's sentence to four years, but he was freed in May pending appeal, and resumed his leadership of the SBSI on 1 July. Three other union activists from Medan were freed that month.

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