

HUNGRY 30s RETURN

ONE in three children in Britain is born into deprivation and decay, with their parents trying to survive on benefits or low pay. Malnutrition is stunting the growth and mental development of millions of children now living in poverty, recent research has exposed.

BY THE EDITOR

Babies who fail to thrive at birth will, at the age of six, have 'IQ' deficiencies of between five and 20 points.

These findings add weight to national long-term studies of children which have shown the most deprived 11-year-olds are up to 13cm shorter than their peers and have the lowest educational attainments.

A further survey of 179 local authorities and 36 health authorities carried out by the School Milk Campaign has found evidence of poor nutrition and poor growth rates in children from poor families in all but one area.

Figures

Figures due to have been released by the Department of Social Security last month were expected to underline the picture of growing poverty in Britain on a scale not seen since the 1930s.

But the figures have been delayed as the Department is changing its methodology,

fuelling widespread fear that, like the unemployment statistics, the figures are being doctored to suit the Tory government's purposes.

■ Many asylum seekers are now denied benefits, leaving them to face complete destitution.

■ Single parent benefits are to be cut, hitting some of the most vulnerable people.

■ More stringent tests and reductions in housing, disability and unemployment benefits are being introduced.

■ The benefit helpline — used by 60,000 people a week — was last week replaced with the shop-a-cheat hotline.

■ Welfare workers now fear that free hot school meals are about to be scrapped.

The government plans to pass responsibility for meal standards over to schools themselves, provoking fears that the only guaranteed source of nutrition for millions of the poorest children will disappear.

Liverpool picket



Liverpool dockers and their supporters continue to picket and campaign to get back the jobs of the 500 sacked men.

Last Monday supporters got up bright and early, especially those from as far away as London, to be at the gate to the Seaforth container terminal (left and bottom left) at 6am.

And the London support group (below) leaflets the Canadian Pacific office on Trafalgar Square, every Friday from 3.30pm to 6pm. Canadian Pacific owns Cast, one of the shipping lines that continues to use the scab port of Liverpool. The sacked dockworkers demand that Cast, and the ACL shipping line, stop going to Liverpool.



Liverpool dockers

Monday 19 August: Community march to Seaforth dock from Quadrant Park, Derby Road, opposite Elm House pub, near Strand, Bootle, Liverpool. Assemble 12noon.

Saturday 28 September: First year anniversary march and rally, Myrtle Parade to Pier Head, 1pm.

DOCKERS CHARTER

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Available from the Liverpool Docks Shop Stewards' Committee, c/o 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. Money to 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Appeal'. Price 50p (20p unwaged). Add postage. Also send donations. Bulk orders tel: 0151-207 3388.

AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Workers Press!

OVER the next two months Workers Press will be involved in an intense campaign for the recall meeting of our March Conference which met to discuss the theme 'Crisis in the labour movement — the need for a new socialist party'. The recall conference will take place on the first weekend of November.

Since that time the Workers Revolutionary Party has decided to propose at the November Conference that it cease to exist as a separate political organisation and that it should join with all those who are seeking to build an organisation that will prepare for this new party.

The resources of the WRP, including Workers Press, would be placed at the disposal of this organisation.

Our call is already meeting with a most encouraging response (see page 6).

We hope that all readers of Workers Press will take the most active part in this work. But to succeed we need resources. We need your help to get the paper to ever wider circles of people interested in this proposal.

We need your help, and those of many others, to expand our coverage of the many struggles now erupting in the working class, in Britain and internationally.

So can we appeal to you to make a donation to this work, however big or small? Without your help, and the help of a growing number of readers and supporters, we cannot accomplish this important turning point. Do not let us down.

Send all donations to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Workers Press

New stage for Irish working class

THIS month marks the 25th anniversary of the introduction of internment without trial in the north of Ireland. In the early hours of the morning the British army dragged hundreds of men and women from their beds, half-clothed, tied them up and bundled them into vans.

Over a period of time many of the internees were subjected to different forms of torture including inhuman acts of sensory deprivation in which they were deprived of sleep, food and drink.

Internment — which was sanctioned by the Tory government of Ted Heath — led to fresh waves of young people joining the mass movement against British rule that very quickly removed the six-county parliament at Stormont.

* * * * *

WHERE stands this movement today? Last weekend in Derry hundreds of young people attacked the RUC and a police station with stones, bottles and petrol bombs.

Monday's *Irish Times* reports, 'Mr McGuinness [Sinn Fein leader] said he and other Sinn Fein members in Derry worked until 5am yesterday to restore order.'

Sinn Fein won the leadership of the mass movement. Its role now is to attempt to corral the youth in order to stop any actions that may lead to a breakdown of 'order'.

The Sinn Fein leadership is frightened that more confrontations between the nationalist youth and the state's armed forces — such as took place in many areas following the RUC's batoning of the residents of the Garvaghy Road — will kill forever any chance of the 'peace process' being revived.

It is into this Tory-imposed 'peace process', with its plans for a restored six-county parliament, defended by the British army, that Sinn Fein has taken the struggle and sacrifices since internment.

The Republican leadership has long given up any pretence that it is a socialist party. It has dropped the demand for the withdrawal of British troops and does not raise any demands around which the working class can be mobilised.

It is now an openly nationalist party distinguishable from John Hume's Social Democratic and Labour Party only by its links with the IRA. Its main emphasis is now on 'parity of esteem' for the Irish language and Irish culture and demands for the re-routing of loyalist marches.

* * * * *

ORGANISATIONS like the Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys of Derry have propped up British rule and been an instrument in the repression and discrimination of Catholics.

But the concentration on the re-routing of their marches is a diversion from the main issue of British rule and reflects Sinn Fein's inability to make any connection with the Protestant working class.

The movement of the nationalist working class started with the defence of Catholics and demands for civil rights, but it could only succeed by winning sections of the Protestant working class in the fight for socialism.

Sinn Fein is incapable of developing such a struggle and now acts to reinforce the divisions. Its pandering to the worst aspects of Catholic nationalism showed itself in recent weeks.

During the increased tensions that followed the confrontation at Drumcree, Protestant-owned businesses in some towns have been boycotted by many Catholics. Sinn Fein councillors have publicly defended these actions.

* * * * *

THESE are critical times for the Irish working class. The religious divisions are being emphasised over the need for unity against the increased economic exploitation and state repression.

The involvement of the Sinn Fein leadership in negotiations with British imperialism without winning one concession is a betrayal of all those who fought to ensure that internment would not be repeated.

It also conclusively marks the end of this stage of the struggle and underlines the need for an independent working-class party fighting to unite the working-class in the struggle against imperialism.

Letters

Engels and genocide II

IN THE recently published symposium for the centenary of Engels's death (*The Condition of Britain*, edited by John Lea and Geoff Pilling, Pluto), Peter Fryer — like Terry Brotherstone in another place (see Letters, 20 July) — gives a nod of approval to Nicholas Jacobs for his tireless efforts to protect readers of a nervous disposition from the harsh language use by Marx's colleague.

Someone had quoted from a passage in one of Engels's 1849 articles, using the translation included in *The Russian Menace to Europe*, a selection of articles by Marx and Engels edited by two Americans, Blackstock and Haselitz, published in 1953. Here is the passage, in that translation:

"There is no country in Europe which does not contain in some corner one or several ruins of people, left-overs of earlier inhabitants, pushed back by and made subject to the nation which later became the carrier of historical development. These remains of nations which have been mercilessly tramped down by the passage of history, as Hegel expressed it, this ethnic trash, always becomes and remains until its complete extermination or denationalisation the most fanatic carrier of counter-revolution, since its entire existence is nothing more than a protest against a great historical revolution."

Writing to *Encounter* in 1990, Jacobs expressed indignation at what he saw as the flagrant mistranslation of Engels's *Völkessabfälle* as 'ethnic trash'. This should, he claimed, be rendered 'something like "redundant remains of peoples"'

Two comments on this exercise in philology. First, *Abfälle* is

the everyday German word of 'refuse' — the stuff that the collectors call to take away. Americans name the receptacle they use for it 'trash-can'. Second, in translation one ought to keep the tone of the original, neither raising nor lowering it. 'Redundant remains' is here a fancy way of saying 'refuse' or 'trash', instead of using the English (British or American) equivalent of Engels's blunt German. The *Collected Works* translation of the passage is also guilty of this (embarrassed?) elevation of tone, turning *Abfälle* into 'residual fragments' (vol.8, p.234).

By the way, Engels's examples of 'ethnic trash' are 'the Scots Gaels', the Bretons, the Basques, and 'the Southern Slavs of the Austrian Empire'.

Brian Pearce
New Barnet, Herts.

Multi-issue campaigns

IN THE discussion around the new party in Workers Press there have been differing views on whether protests like the anti-Newbury bypass movement had any relevance to the working-class movement (see, for example, Mike Howgate, Letters, 23 March).

A short article in the *Guardian* seems to contribute some new information on this ('Action marks move beyond "single issue" campaigning', by Alex Bellos, 8 August). It describes how a cyclists' organisation, Critical Mass, supported the tube workers on their strike day (7 August).

Critical Mass has been organising demonstrations in 30 towns and cities since 1994. But their support for the tube strike was the first time they mobilised support for another cause.

This cross-fertilisation can be seen across the protest move-

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ment,' wrote Bellos. 'The landscape is not one of mutually exclusive organisations, but of overlapping "disorganisations"'

The campaign against the Newbury bypass, entering its second phase this week, is in contact with Corporate Watch, a new organisation based in Oxford that advises on how to campaign against large companies.

Costain, which has the contract to build the road, is being targeted. Corporate Watch is also linked to the Lloyds-Midland Boycott and the McLibel Support Campaign.

Newbury campaigners have also been helped by Justice, a group opposed to the Criminal Justice Act that is based in Brighton and produces the *SchNEWS*, the protest movement's national newsletter. Justice is also involved in squatters' campaigns.

'Groundswell, a new campaign against the Jobseeker's Allowance, is also using these networks.

'Paul Deluce, of Corporate Watch, said that the concept of a single issue group was now meaningless. He said: "Pick any issue and there is a multitude of issues. Newbury is not just about the environment. It is also about transport, housing, and biodiversity. We are interested in jobs and local communities' needs. Calling them single issues is only trying to marginalise them."

To me this is not a million miles from Lenin's struggle in *What is to be Done?* (1902) against 'Economism'. In that historic pamphlet he fought against those who said that workers' struggles should be confined to 'economic' issues — what we would call the 'industrial' struggle.

Lenin stressed that the work-

ing-class struggle was political, fought on behalf of the whole of society.

Christine Mitchley
London SE5

'Surfing' for socialists

THE International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign has taken the plunge! We have joined our many fellow activists in the workers' movement who are already 'surfing' the net.

We are now projecting our message and promoting our work through the WorldWide Web in the bold, professional manner necessary for a workers' organisation conducting serious business.

Our 'Web' site is easily found, so if you have access to the internet, give it a whirl.

Encourage your friends and colleagues to get involved too. If you don't have internet access yourself try to find someone who has. Publicise it where you can, especially to contacts in the workers' movement outside of Britain.

We have used Labournet because it had a sound reputation among worker-activists and is growing increasingly popular for the service it provides.

Let us know what you think of the material and suggest improvements.

In about two months we will have a unique 'domain' for ITUSC, which means that the 'address' will be greatly shortened and easier to access.

Keith Standing
General secretary
ITUSC, Epsom

The ITUSC 'addresses' are:
WorldWide Web: <http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/itusc/>
E-mail: itusc@gn.apc.org

South African comrade attacked

COMRADE NM, a member of the Workers International in Durban, South Africa, was seriously ill in hospital as we went to press.

He was shot on Friday 2 August at about 9pm. He was hit by bullets in the stomach and in both hands.

NM, in his mid-30s, is married with five children. His wife and children are shocked and very frightened.

NM did not recognise his attackers since they were wearing balaclava helmets.

Our comrade was a victimised trade unionist and his family are currently in great financial need. They also need our moral support. Please send money made payable to 'Workers International', PO Box 735, London SW8.

Burston strike school (1914-39) 82nd anniversary

IN 1914 the attention of the whole trade union movement was focused on a village in Norfolk where there were demonstrations and rallies in support of children who had gone on strike from Burston County Council School. Parents were summonsed and fined for not sending their children to the state school.

The children's teachers, Annie and Tom Higdon, had been sacked on trumped up charges. A school was set up on the green in Burston.

After a period in a redundant carpenter's shop, a strike school was built in 1917 with funds raised in a national appeal. The Higdons taught there until shortly before Annie's death in 1939.

The Higdons were victimised for their part in organising the

Agricultural Labourers' Union and for farmworkers to vote for their own representatives on the parish council. The rector and the farmers lost their seats.

In revenge, Annie was accused of slapping a child — a charge she denied. Eventually the child involved confirmed this but appeals to Norfolk County Council were to no avail.

'The strike school stands as a tribute to the terrible oppression by the ruling class which was so noticeable in rural areas and the indomitable spirit of the people of Burston who together with the Higdons fought this tyranny by clergy and farmers,' says TGWU regional officer Tony Gould, in a leaflet advertising this year's Burston strike school rally. 'This message remains valid 82 years later.'

RALLY

Burston, near Diss, Norfolk (just off A140 Norwich/Ipswich Road)

Sunday 1 September, 10.45am-3.30pm

A shuttle service for disabled people will be provided from the car park until 10.30am. Note — toilet facilities for disabled people are unfortunately limited.

Bosnia Solidarity Campaign Who are we?

Statement of aims.

Only 50p from Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, 26 Framlingham Close, London E5 9PR. Tel: 0181-806 0249.

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International Trade Unionist Bulletin

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RMT tube union calls for strike vote

BY JACKIE VANCE

THE Rail Marine and Transport Union (RMT) has started a campaign for a rejection of London Underground's proposed deal with the train drivers' unions.

The deal is being recommended by Aslef, the majority union representing the drivers, but the London district council of RMT has issued a leaflet calling for a 'No' vote in the ballot.

In a series of one-day strikes the drivers had shown their determination to win the cut of one hour off the 38.5 hour week negotiated last year but reneged on by the management.

London Underground has offered a 35 hour week over three years but only if the drivers

accept three years of pay cuts below the rate of inflation.

In a leaflet the RMT explain that this will mean pay cuts in excess of 6 per cent. The offer proposes reductions of 1.7 per cent in 1996-97 and 2 per cent in each of the following years.

'The true picture is worse. The real cut can't be judged by simply adding up these figures. The real effect would be cumulative — each cut deepening the previous one.'

Many drivers would be hit with a permanent cut in pensions. 'Anyone retiring between now and autumn 1999 will suffer a permanent cut of up to 6 per cent in their pensions.'

'Pensions are calculated on the final year's salary. That means a permanent saving for the company for the rest of that person's lifetime.'

The RMT leaflet continues: 'The conversion back to an hourly rate from a salary together with

the clause stating that the company will never offer a full-time contract below 35 hours means one thing and one thing only — PART-TIMERS. We got rid of that last year — let's not accept it this year!'

Fighting

'What's the point of fighting for more time off — in order to end up with massive amounts of extra overtime — which would soon become compulsory —

because your team would lose its "attendance bonus" unless you put yourself down for it.

'Of course this would be one way of making up for the pay cut the company have made in the first place! No Joint Working Parties!'

The proposed deal comes when the strike was getting stronger and winning more support in the workers' movement in London.

It also had won support from the direct action campaigners in

the Critical Mass movement. They occupied the offices of the head of London Underground throwing papers out the window.

Hundreds of cyclists slowed down the traffic on the already blocked up roads, carrying a banner: 'Squeeze the car not the tube.'

Many of those involved in 'single' issue and environmental campaigns are understanding the necessity of linking the struggles and turning towards the fights in the workers' movement.

■ See Letter, page 2.

'We will not tolerate this buck-passing'

THE the railway operators' PR machine rolled into operation last weekend to suggest that the Watford rail disaster 'looks like human error' (*Guardian*, 10 August) and minimise criticisms that privatisation would inevitably lead to lower safety.

The union of both drivers involved, Aslef, responded

angrily. It said it remained concerned at the impact of 'fragmentation' caused by privatisation.

'Fragmentation of the industry has produced a "blame culture" where each of the privatised companies involved in the rail industry blames someone else when something goes wrong,' said an Aslef representative.

'Eventually they blame so-called "driver error" and we will not tolerate this buck-passing.'

'We were promised the introduction of Automated Train Protection (ATP) after the Clapham rail disaster. There is no doubt if that promise had been honoured, the introduction of ATP would have prevented a number of seri-

ous incidents on the railways since then. The prospect of ATP being introduced now is obviously lessened as privatised sectors of the industries compete with each other for profit.'

Automated Train Protection would have made it impossible for a train to pass a red or faulty signal.

'Undertakers' of the NHS

'UNDERTAKERS of the NHS' is how one senior health authority official has described the job facing doctors, 'as more and more areas of the NHS are dismantled. We are not only executive directors, but executors of an estate which is being finalised for probate.'

Dr Stephen Farrow used his 94-page annual report as Barnet's director of public health to set out in mordant terms the crisis facing the NHS. The NHS is a 'depressing sight', according to Dr Farrow.

'We are at a point where we must introduce substantial restrictions on the health care to which people once believed they were entitled,' he wrote.

'We are talking about services

older people will not get when they leave hospital and others will have to pay for.'

He described the debates about relative effectiveness of treatments, encouraged by the government, as a 'comfortable diversion' from the real question.

He argued that health authority managers are inhabiting an Alice in Wonderland world. 'We have moved in one year from mad cow disease to the mad hatter's tea party,' he wrote.

While fund-holding had done much to improve care of some patients, 'the downside has been the two-tier system.'

The internal market in the NHS had led to 'a paper-chase of the highest order' for health authorities and health care trusts.

Pensioners demand what they paid for

Comment by PETER GIBSON

FOR those millions of working men and women who voted Labour in 1945 — and who since then have paid National Insurance and all the other taxes — New Labour's refusal to give any undertaking to 're-establish the link' between the state retirement pension and average wages is seen as a kick in the teeth.

On Saturday 14 September there is a march and rally in London under the slogan 'For a fair state pension'.

This will involve not only pensioners' organisations, like the National Pensions' Convention, but celebrities like football manager Jack Charlton, violinist Yehudi Menuhin, singer Cleo Lane, lawyer Michael Mansfield and many trade union national leaders.

The organisers say 'We march to Trafalgar Square to mark Pensions' Day, and to stake our claim to a fair, sufficient, earnings-related and guaranteed state pension.'

One of the reasons MPs voted themselves a whacking 26 per cent pay rise was to get a better pension. Not many of them will

be marching — but everyone else should!

The Thatcher government broke the link between pensions and average earnings in 1980 and pegged pensions to the cost of living. However National Insurance has continued to be linked to earnings and unfairly hits lower-paid workers (those just above the 'poverty trap').

The state pension is £61.15 for a single person and £97.75 for a couple. If the link had been maintained since 1980 these figures would now be £82.55 and £132.10. So a single pensioner has lost £21.40 and couples have lost £34.35.

The saving to the government from short-changing pensioners is about £10 billion a year.

The failure of Labour to come clean on their commitment, or lack of it, to the 10.5 million pensioners in Britain has caused an upsurge of feeling and activity.

For information about the rally contact the Pensions' Day Group, 26 Danbury Street, London N1 8JU. Tel: 0171-454 0831. Fax: 0171-454 0825.

Assemble 12.30 pm, Jubilee Gardens by Festival Hall, South Bank. Nearest tube Waterloo. Trafalgar Square rally, 2.30pm.



Pensioners have fallen behind earnings

Investigate trade union and human rights in Pakistan!

A CALL for Pakistan's trade union and human rights violations to be immediately investigated by a fact-finding mission was made to the UN sub-commission on human rights in Geneva on Monday 12 August.

International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign general secretary Keith Standing delivered a statement by the International Solidarity Campaign for the Kashmiri People on behalf of the London-based non-governmental organisation Liberation to highlight the repressions against the Kashmiri people.

After describing repressions in February and June and the most recent elections in Baluch

tan-occupied Kashmir (see Workers Press, 29 June and 6 July), he said:

'Further repressive measures have been taken by the authorities to ban trade union rights. It is mainly through these trade unions that the people, particularly minorities, have been raising their voice for civil liberties and human rights.'

It is a matter of high concern in the world community that by banning the trade unions, the Pakistani government has breached [International Labour Organisation] conventions 87 and 98 to which it is a signatory.

In Pakistan, extra-judicial killing, torture, state sponsored

and private terrorism are becoming the culture of the society. Trade union rights are also under attack.

'Mr Abdul Aziz Memon, the secretary-general of the United Bank Employees Federation and Pakistan MP, together with seven other leading members of that union are in detention just because of their disagreement with the ruling military-feudal alliance and their trade union activities to oppose the summary dismissal of 3,000 employees of the United Bank.'

Last Thursday morning, this sub-commission heard from the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation of the brutalities of

Pakistan's government against the minority Mohajir nation predominantly in Sindh, southern Pakistan.

'We condemn ALL attacks on the rights of minorities.'

He backed up the demands for the fact-finding mission previously made by the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation.

He received 55 requests for copies of his speech, including from 14 governments.

The International Solidarity Campaign for the Kashmiri People can be contacted on tel/fax 0181-925 2414.

The full text of the speech will appear in the *International Trade Unionist Bulletin*.

How do you feel?

BY MARY IDE

ARE you getting your share of the Tories 'feel-good factor'? The May edition of 'Labour Market Trends' gives the average male manual earnings for full-time workers as £298.40. For women the figure is £192.00.

But this is nowhere near the whole story. A United Nations' report says that in 1960 the richest 20 per cent were 30 times better off than the poorest 20 per cent. Now the richest 20 per cent is 61 times wealthier.

In Britain you can be a member of the Conservative Party's 'Premier Club' for just £10,000 a year. To be a 'founder member' requires £100,000. As the club's secretary, Mrs Frances Prens, herself pointed out, club membership can be paid by company cheque and declared as 'entertaining or whatever' on balance sheets. Yet another way of hiding political contributions from the fat-cat companies.

In contrast, many millions do not get anywhere near the 'average' wage. And many millions — far more than official figures would have us believe — do not have a job and have to scrape by on benefits.

Officially there are 2,696,326 are claiming benefit. But the Unemployment Unit says the number looking for work is 3,117,100 and the Employment Policy Institute, in its new 'Employment Audit', estimates there are 4.5 million out of work — twice the official figure.

Who is right? Consider the following evidence from the government's own National Statistics Office.

The total workforce fell by a further 71,000 in the first quarter of 1996 ('unemployment' remained fairly steady).

Down

In May, the number of people working in energy and water supply was only 219,000 — down by 17,000. The total employed in manufacturing was down by 31,000 to only 3,807,000.

There are more than 1.5 million men who in the words of official reports are no longer 'economically active' — that is, do not expect to work again and are not on the official list of those out of work and claiming benefit.

Cooking the books may make the Tories and the employers 'feel good' but not those at the sharp end of low pay and unemployment.

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Inside left

Colonel of the XV Brigade

THE 60th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War has renewed interest in the story of the International Brigades. There have been meetings, and debates in Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom*. And Walter Gregory's highly-readable memoir *The Shallow Grave* has been published as a paperback.

Gregory took part in the National Unemployed Workers Movement, and fought Mosley's fascists on the streets of Nottingham, before enlisting in the British battalion of the XV Brigade, fighting action at Jarama, Brunete and Fuentes de Ebro.

Although the XV Brigade largely comprised British, American, Irish and other English-speaking volunteers (and young Spaniards), its commander was Vladimir Copic, born at Senj on the Croatian coast, in 1891, one of 13 children. He was arrested in 1912 for nationalist student activity.

Conscripted to the Austro-Hungarian army in World War I, Copic was captured by the Russians, but freed by the October revolution. Back in Croatia, he was jailed for communist activity in 1919. Elected to the Yugoslav parliament in 1920, Copic wrote for the paper *Borba* (Struggle), and was imprisoned several times before he went to fight in Spain.

The Book of the XV Brigade, from which this information comes, went on to say: 'He maintains very cordial, comradely relations with the men in his Brigade, and is often found enjoying with them their moments of relaxation. In community singing his booming voice can be distinguished from a distance. His relationship with the Spanish population is equally close — he is most considerate of their interests, and is in turn loved by them. Feared by the enemy, respected by men, loved by the people — the mark of a real commander in any men's army' (1938, Madrid, republished Frank Graham, Newcastle, 1975).

Peter N. Carroll, relying on Stalinist sources, is less kind. On the battle of Jarama, 27 February 1937: 'Colonel Vladimir Copic, the Yugoslav commander of the 15th Brigade, ordered Merriman to advance. The American protested the futility of the operation...' (*The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, Stanford University Press, 1994, p.100).

He tells how soldiers 'presented their demands to brigade leaders, including Colonel Vladimir Copic, who had overridden Merriman's objection and ordered the ill-fated attack. Copic had no intention, of course of permitting a court-martial of himself' (p.114).

At the Ebro, in October 1937, Soviet tank commanders misread their maps, ending up in deep ditches, while the lead tanks left following troops behind and became isolated behind enemy lines. In parentheses, Carroll adds: 'shocked by the fiasco, Soviet military officials requested a personal report from the Lincoln Brigade commissar. According to one Soviet veteran, the disaster led to the recall — and execution — of Colonel Copic' (p.162).

Walter Gregory, however, credits Copic with rallying the troops and restoring morale after the retreat from Jarama (pp.112-3). He says 'Vladimir Copic was ideally suited to take command of the Brigade. His expertise, coupled with his popularity, assured us of our respect and admiration. Indeed, I cannot recall Copic being the subject of criticism' (*Shallow Grave*, p.58).

Copic, one of several Yugoslav purge victims, was murdered at the same time as many of the Red Army's finest commanders. The colonel of the XV Brigade was one among many who fought fascism, only to fall victim to Stalin's treacherous regime.

Charlie Pottins
Walter Gregory's *The Shallow Grave* (Five Leaves Publications, Nottingham, \$6.99) is available from Index Bookcentres, 0171-636 3532.

Uganda

Ballot-rigging wins

Uganda's recent elections were a sham. ALFRED BANYA from the African Liberation Support Campaign reports on what happened, the arguments used by Uganda's military ruler to suppress opposition and the privatisation offensive against the country

FRAUDULENT elections were held in Uganda in May and June of this year to ensure the continued rule of the dictator Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement.

Museveni claimed a clean sweep with 4.1 million of the 6.2 million votes cast in the presidential election. But these votes were only obtained through widespread intimidation, deception, cheating and open purchase of votes.

The elections were held under a recently proclaimed constitution that, in effect, prohibits Ugandans from electing their leaders from political parties of their choice. Only Lieutenant General Yoweri Museveni's political organisation, the National Resistance Movement, was allowed to operate.

The constitution, whose drafting was heavily funded and influenced by Britain and the international financial institutions, provides for 'freedom of association which shall include the freedom to form and join associations or unions, including trade unions, political parties and civic organisations'.

However, after apparently enshrining these fundamental rights to association, the constitution proceeds to remove them by proscribing all other political organisations except Museveni's 'Movement'. The constitution states:

'On the commencement of this constitution and until parliament makes laws regulating the activities of political organisations... political activities may continue except:

(a) Opening and operating branch offices;

(b) Holding public rallies;

(c) Holding delegate conferences;

(d) Sponsoring or offering a platform to or in any way campaigning for or against a candidate for any public elections;

(e) Carrying on any activities that may interfere with the Movement political system for the time being in force.'

In the lead up to the elections 'Movement' supporters were allowed to campaign using state resources while armed thugs of Museveni's Local Defence Units assaulted, arrested and detained the opposition even when they tried to hold private meetings.

James Obua Otoa, an opposition candidate in Lango, northern Uganda, was arrested with 20 others when they were holding a private meeting in the home of his campaign manager.

Professor Kagenda Atwoki, a parliamentary candidate and a prominent member of the Uganda People's Congress, was badly assaulted in Fort Portal, western Uganda by the regime's thugs.

There was a house-to-house check by members of Local Defence Units instructing voters to vote for Museveni or face the consequences. Ugandans over the years have experienced the brutalities of Museveni's army on civilians and knew exactly what this meant.

Intimidation

This intimidation was accompanied by dictatorial statements from Museveni and his officials, who made it clear that they would not peacefully accept an electoral defeat.

'The National Resistance Movement is here to stay and can never hand over power to the opposition unless through force of arms', said one cabinet minister.

Colonel Kahinda Otaffive, minister of state for security, announced that if Museveni was defeated the army would move within 24 hours to recapture power.

Museveni insisted he had taken time to build his army NRA (UPDF) and he was not going to hand it over even if he did not win the election. 'There will be turmoil in the country if I am defeated', he said in a Channel 4 interview on British television.

The Ugandan People's Congress and IPFC have detailed some of the methods used to rig the elections. These include:

■ The government announced the existence of 720 secret polling sta-

tions in security zones. Nobody knows where they were located or what took place there but results from them were announced.

■ On the eve of the elections, a further 728 polling stations were proclaimed as 'secret' in security zones. Again no details were given other than the results — all in favour of Museveni.

■ Voting registers in some parts of the country were altered on the eve of polling day. When they were compared with the original, official lists, big differences were found, including the addition of new names of unknown voters while the names of known Museveni supporters appeared more than five times.

■ In almost all of the constituencies returning officers, polling agents and observers were the government's Resistance Movement officials. The opposition did not have agents or observers in many polling stations because of threats or as a result of the secret polling stations which were out of bounds on security grounds.

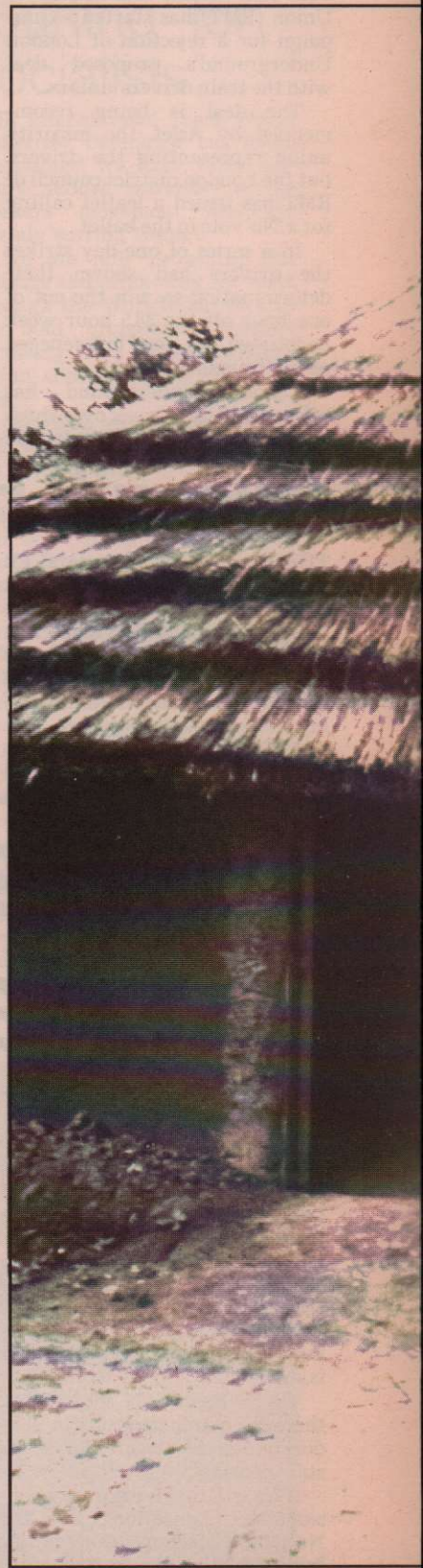
■ Returning officers and government agents had powers to open and seal at will all ballot boxes and even tamper with the votes.

In areas like western Uganda, which is Museveni's support base, ballot boxes were opened and most of the votes meant for the opposition were ticked twice, thus rendering them spoilt votes. In other areas like Masaka, Lira Town and Saroti, where Museveni is known to have little support, his votes were substituted for opposition votes.

■ There were unexplainable increases in the number of voters between 1993 and 1996. The majority of the polling stations had more than 20 per cent increases while very many jumped by over 100 per cent.

■ There were demographically impossible cases. It is known that young children comprise the greater percentage of Uganda's population yet in some electoral areas over 80 per cent of the total population were registered as voters.

■ While the number of registered voters was only 8.4 million, 11.4 million voting cards were printed. These cards were handed out to local councillors for distribution and were used by Museveni's agents to vote a number of times.



One of many children orphaned by the war, people have joined rebel guerrillas.



Rebel forces are formed mainly from peasants uprooted by Museveni; they have had no choice but to fight back

Austerity

THE regime of the Uganda National Resistance Army (alias the Uganda People's Defence Forces) and its supporters justify their clamp-down on people's rights to independent self-organisation by claiming that Ugandans are not ready for 'western-style multi-party politics'.

But the same regime is quick to back the Thatcherite politics and economics of privatisation as the solution to Uganda's problems.

Since May 1987, just over a year after taking power, Lt. General Museveni, the one-time 'socialist' guerrilla leader — who lost elections in 1980 and waged a five-year war that debilitated Uganda's economy and cost immeasurable loss of lives — has embraced wholeheartedly the capitalist measures prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank.

Museveni had vehemently castigated previous governments for listening to these western institutions.

The burden imposed upon Ugandans by Museveni's arrangements with the IMF/World Bank through the Structural Adjustment Pro-

s the day

'No social basis for parties', says despot



by the war against the Museveni regime. Many of these young la forces

BEFORE meeting staunch supporter Baroness Lynda Chalker, the Tory minister for overseas development, Museveni reaffirmed his commitment to stamping out freedom to self-organise:

'There is no social basis for parties here because there is really no middle class. Middle class, liberal ideas are the product of western, industrialised nations but we are living in a backward, pre-industrial society.

'The peasant is more parochial, more traditional. What is supposed to be liberalism and tolerance actually became fragmentation and intolerance when applied to most of Africa.'

Here Museveni displays his ignorance on class in Africa. Capitalism in Africa developed with colonialism.

At the same time the spread of private enterprise together with the needs of the colonial administrative structure produced the first middle class which became part and parcel of the colonial economic and social structure, and continues to be part of the neo-colonial structure that dictators like Museveni are puppets of.

He totally embraces foreign-imposed economic policies that, while working to the detriment of the majority of Ugandans, benefit the middle class that is made up of the National Resistance army officers, top bureaucrats, professionals and technocrats.

Regarding concerns raised on human rights abuse in Uganda, Museveni stated, 'these human rights people don't know what they are doing. I have asked them to go away and leave us alone . . . businessmen are not interested in human rights, they are only interested in profits.'

The priority for the dictatorship has been to satisfy the interests of capital at the expense of the rights of Ugandans. The explanation which effectively says that there is no middle class in Africa and therefore no justification for political parties does not hold.

Kwame Nkrumah had a different analysis of what lay at the root of Africa's oppression and exploitation. He said: 'At the core of the problem is

the class struggle. For too long, social and political commentators have talked and written as though Africa lies outside the main stream of world historical development — a separate entity to which the social, economic and political patterns of the world do not apply.

'Myths such as "African socialism" and "pragmatic socialism", implying the existence of a brand or brands of socialism applicable to Africa alone, have been perpetrated; and much of our history has been written in terms of socio-anthropological and historical theories as though Africa has no history prior to the colonial period.

'One of these distortions has been the suggestion that the class struc-

Middle-class intellectuals were in the leadership of these organisations and maintained links between them. Their growth caused immense concern to the British colonialists and they proved their effectiveness when they organised the first, and last, general labour strike in Uganda in 1945.

They demanded social, economic and political rights, including the right to democratic political representation. The British reacted violently, killing a worker and injuring and arresting many others. They also banned the UAMDW and Bana ba Kintu.

The repressive measures only encouraged the workers and peasants to intensify the struggle. New organisations emerged, including the Uganda Transport and General Workers' Union and the peasants' Federation of African Farmers Union.

A general uprising was organised in 1949 against a puppet regime of the British colonialists. The demands were not only for direct elections but also for fair prices, investment loans and direct access for peasants' produce to world markets rather than through the Asian middleman.

The colonialist, to prevent the broadening of the national movement, partially satisfied the grievances of the urban middle class, the large state farmers and the rich peasants while cracking down on the activities of the workers and poor peasants, hence weakening them politically.

The urban middle class, the large estate farmers and rich peasants were allowed to form legal political parties. The Uganda Credit and Savings Bank and other loan facilities like the African Loan Fund were established for their economic interests.

The activities of the workers and poor peasants were directed into co-operatives and trade unions which were in turn controlled by the state and limited by law in how they could organise and what they could do. Colonialism could not allow them to organise politically as distinct and separate social classes.



Yoweri Museveni

tures which exist in other parts of the world do not exist in Africa.'

The coalition of political forces against colonialism that gradually consolidated itself in Uganda was reflected in the new type of organisations that brought together different social classes opposed to colonial domination and exploitation.

For example, the Bana ba Kintu organisation formed in 1938 brought together peasants and patriotic middle-class intellectuals.

Later, in 1939, the Uganda African Motor Drivers Association (UAMDWA) brought together workers in the cotton-ginning and coffee-processing industries, lorry and bus drivers, and general clerical workers.

for public services, not military spending

gramme (SAP) has been immense. These measures include:

- opening further the Ugandan economy to exploitation by foreign business;
- selling off public bodies to private business;
- removing agreed prices to farmers for coffee and other agricultural produce;
- laying off large number of workers;
- introducing fee-paying for hospital patients;
- cutting government expenditure on health and education.

The Uganda people are paying a high social price for the economic programme of the Museveni regime. Uganda has moved from being the 14th poorest country in the world when Museveni came to power to its current position of fourth poorest.

Dropped

The per capita income which was about \$250 at independence has dropped to roughly \$170.

In a country of 18 million people, more than 13 million live below the poverty line and 80 per cent of the

school-going population does not complete seven years education.

One in ten of all children dies before reaching the age of five. This situation is one of the worst in Africa.

The cuts in public expenditure on education and health, coupled with the introduction of users' fees at hospitals, have contributed to a marked reduction in the use of hospitals. Workers and peasants, who are the majority, form the poorest and most vulnerable groups of Ugandans and have been the hardest hit.

Many patients in need of medical attention are forced by costs to wait and see if the illness will go away before visiting the hospital — inevitably resulting in complications and deaths due to late diagnosis.

The increase in school fees resulting from the regime's reduction in its provision for education has meant that parents cannot afford to send their children to school. Those who may be able to afford a proportion of the fees are forced to choose which child to educate. In most cases it is the boys

who are picked and the girls end up staying at home.

Cuts in education have also meant poor pay for teachers. Many, particularly at primary school level, have left the profession and chosen to become market traders, an occupation previously frowned upon by this category of professionals. The proportion of young people becoming teachers is at an all-time low.

Cuts

All the cuts in public spending have taken place while spending on military equipment by the regime has continued lavishly.

Last year alone military equipment to the tune of \$7 million was bought from South Africa. Since the regime has been in power China has supplied it with arms worth more than \$54 million, North Korea \$79.6 million and the former Soviet Union, \$27 million.

It is criminal that such expenditure is incurred in the name of workers and peasants, who as a consequence are laid off, unable to obtain fair prices for their crops and who have hardly any access to

health services, education, shelter and other essential services.

The political costs of these measures have not been small for the Ugandan worker and peasant.

Western countries have not only turned a blind eye to Museveni's imposition of his 'no-party democracy' on Ugandans, but have been accomplices in the making of the constitution that removes the right of Ugandans to independently self-organise.

It is preferable for foreign business to have a puppet they can control rather than having a leader accountable to the majority.

Trade unions, peasants' co-operatives and professional associations were already weakened at independence by the colonial government and subsequently subordinated to the state. But now they have under the current regime been almost completely subsumed by the state.

Museveni has completed the work of the colonialists who set out to destroy independent trade unionism, by curbing their political right to independently organise.

Letter from a worker

The following first appeared in the Uganda Monitor newspaper:

WE ARE medical workers with Tororo District Administration manning various health units in Samia-Bugwe county. We have been hearing local government minister Bidandi Ssali on Radio Uganda instructing concerned authorities to pay all workers their salaries.

However, many medical workers, particularly at Lumino Health Centre, have now spent 25 months without pay.

Many of our children have dropped out of school and turned into thieves.

Girls have run away with men, several of them crossing to Kenya to work as housegirls.

Many of the workers have died leaving behind their salaries unsettled. Many of the group employees whose services were terminated some time back are still singing the song of the money they had worked for for the period.

Marriages have broken. One wonders whether these people who have continually eaten our money are really human.

Or could it be that the government has forgotten us?

Egesa Paschal Busia, Uganda.

A national scandal

PERSONAL COLUMN

A PERVERSE verdict. That was the howl with which right-wing commentators greeted a Liverpool jury's decision to acquit the four women whose hammers wrecked the nose cone, radar, and bomb attachments of a Hawk jet fighter destined for Indonesia.

No such comment has been heard about the majority verdict of 'misadventure' brought in by the inquest jury which last week considered the death of 33-year-old Brian Douglas under the murderous long-handled batons of the police officers who arrested him in Clapham, south London.

Indeed, the inquest attracted comparatively little press attention. To expand an ancient journalistic rule of thumb, if a man bites a dog or a black person kills a cop, that's news, but if a dog bites a man or a cop kills a black person, that's not news — not even in August, traditionally the 'silly season', when garbage gets pumped up and elevated to the top of the page.

Yet if ever a jury's decision stood out as a model of judicial perversity, flying in the face of the medical evidence, the Douglas verdict was that decision. It shocked Douglas's family; it shocked the black community; it shocked those of us outside that community who for some 12 years have been drawing attention to the deadly consequences of unbridled police racism.

The police officer whose blows to Douglas's skull resulted in his death claimed that, in fear of attack, he struck at the shoulder as he was trained to do. But his baton 'slid' up the neck to the head.

The medical diagram seen on television, showing the exact location of the deadly blows, suggests that this must have been the strangest and most unaccountable slide of all time — not downwards but upwards, against the direction of the blow and contrary to the law of gravity. (Perhaps that law, like those supposed to govern police conduct, was temporarily suspended in the course of this shameful incident.)

NOT that a different verdict would automatically have brought the Douglas family within sight of the justice they are seeking. Take the case of the 34-year-old Nigerian asylum-seeker Shiji Lapite, who died of asphyxiation in December 1994 after being put in a neckhold when arrested on suspicion of possessing illegal drugs.

Last January an inquest jury in St Pancras, north London, heard that Lapite, a painter and decorator, and the father of two children, had suffered 45 separate injuries to his body, including a crushed larynx. Two officers concerned, attached to Stoke Newington police station, claimed that Lapite had become very violent and they had had to restrain him.

They admitted that they had kicked their prisoner in the head and bitten him. The coroner said to one of them: 'You had just a graze to your elbow. There appears to be a great disparity of injuries, to say the least, between you and the deceased.'

The jury unanimously returned a verdict of unlawful killing. This verdict led the coroner to advise the Association of Chief Police Officers to instruct all officers about the dangers of neckholds; and it led the Crown Prosecution Service to agree to re-examine its initial decision not to prosecute.

Last week — on the day following the Douglas inquest — the CPS said it had concluded that, after all, there was not enough evidence for proceedings against the officers.

Last week, too, it was announced that no one will be prosecuted over the death of Wayne Douglas in police custody at Brixton, south London — the

51st black person to die in police custody in this country in the past 27 years.

TO UNDERSTAND the state of mind which, in London at any rate, largely dictates such atrocious police behaviour to black prisoners, we have to go back 13 years and read the damning but now forgotten report on the Metropolitan Police published by the Policy Studies Institute.

Entitled *Police and People in London*, this was the most extensive study of the Metropolitan Police ever carried out.

It said that racist talk and racial prejudice are 'expected, accepted and even fashionable'. It said that 'one criterion that police officers use for stopping people, especially in areas of relatively low ethnic concentration, is that they are black'.

It said that 'police officers tend to make a crude equation between crime and black people, to assume that suspects are black and to justify stopping people in those terms'.

It said that 'to a considerable extent, police hostility towards people of West Indian origin is connected with the belief that they are rootless, alienated, poor, unable to cope and deviant in various ways'.

It said that police officers freely use such racist terms as 'coons', 'niggers', 'satchies', 'sooties', 'spades', 'monkeys', 'spooks', and 'Pakis'. The authors were unable to 'produce examples of police officers objecting to racialist language'.

'[A]part from these casually abusive references,' they added, 'there is a vein of deliberately hostile and bitter comment on black people by police officers'.

Moreover 'hostility to black people is linked, in the minds of these police officers, with racialist theories, right-wing politics, fear of violence and disorder caused by black people, a *psycho-logical need for retribution and the view that retribution is legitimate*' (emphasis added).

The level of racial prejudice in the Force was 'cause for serious concern'.

For 13 years this devastating report, read by few when it was published or since, all but ignored by press and television, has been gathering dust on library shelves. Neither the police chiefs nor their political masters have ever taken its findings on board.

Except for occasional half-hearted cosmetic fumbblings and bland assurances by such luminaries as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, *nothing whatever* has been done to tackle the state of affairs to which it drew attention.

So nothing has changed. The police still believe, as they believed in 1983, that 'violent retribution is legitimate'. What that means, in plain terms, is that police believe themselves justified in beating hell out of black people.

This is the norm. Who can doubt it? Black people who fall into the hands of this racist police force know just what to expect.

Occasionally a black person wins damages, as Derek Pascal was awarded £3,500 damages against Stoke Newington police in 1986, having been beaten, punched, burnt on the hand with a lighted cigarette, and forced to repeat: 'I am a black bastard.'

From time to time the 'violent retribution' gets out of hand, and this or that black victim doesn't survive the beating. So black people are dying in police custody at the rate of almost two a year.

This is a national scandal. How much longer shall we let it go on?

Peter Fryer

Edinburgh International Festival

The burden of our lies

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

A SINGLE actor enters, sits on a chair beneath simple lighting, and speaks uninterrupted for an hour and a half. There is no action, only conversational gestures. The audience is gripped.

It is the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, and the Fringe Festival is beginning. The play providing this unforgettable experience is *The Fever* by the New York writer, Wallace Shawn. The actor (the Canadian Clare Coulter) plays a woman emerging from a delirium.

She is in an unspecified 'revolutionary country', and at one point she imagines herself 'at the coolest hour of the day'. She says, 'I wonder if I could put down for a moment the burden of lies, of lying.' How else can she overcome the sense that her cultured, concerned, liberal life is 'irredeemably corrupt'?

Few could fail to be moved by this woman, whose apparently random reflections and reminiscences are so skilfully knitted together into a marvellously structured monologue. But some might dismiss her as merely a tortured progressive, American and middle-class, who has stumbled into the real, political world.

She is much more. Earlier in her fevered, yet measured, discourse she speaks about Marxism and her efforts to read *Das Kapital*.

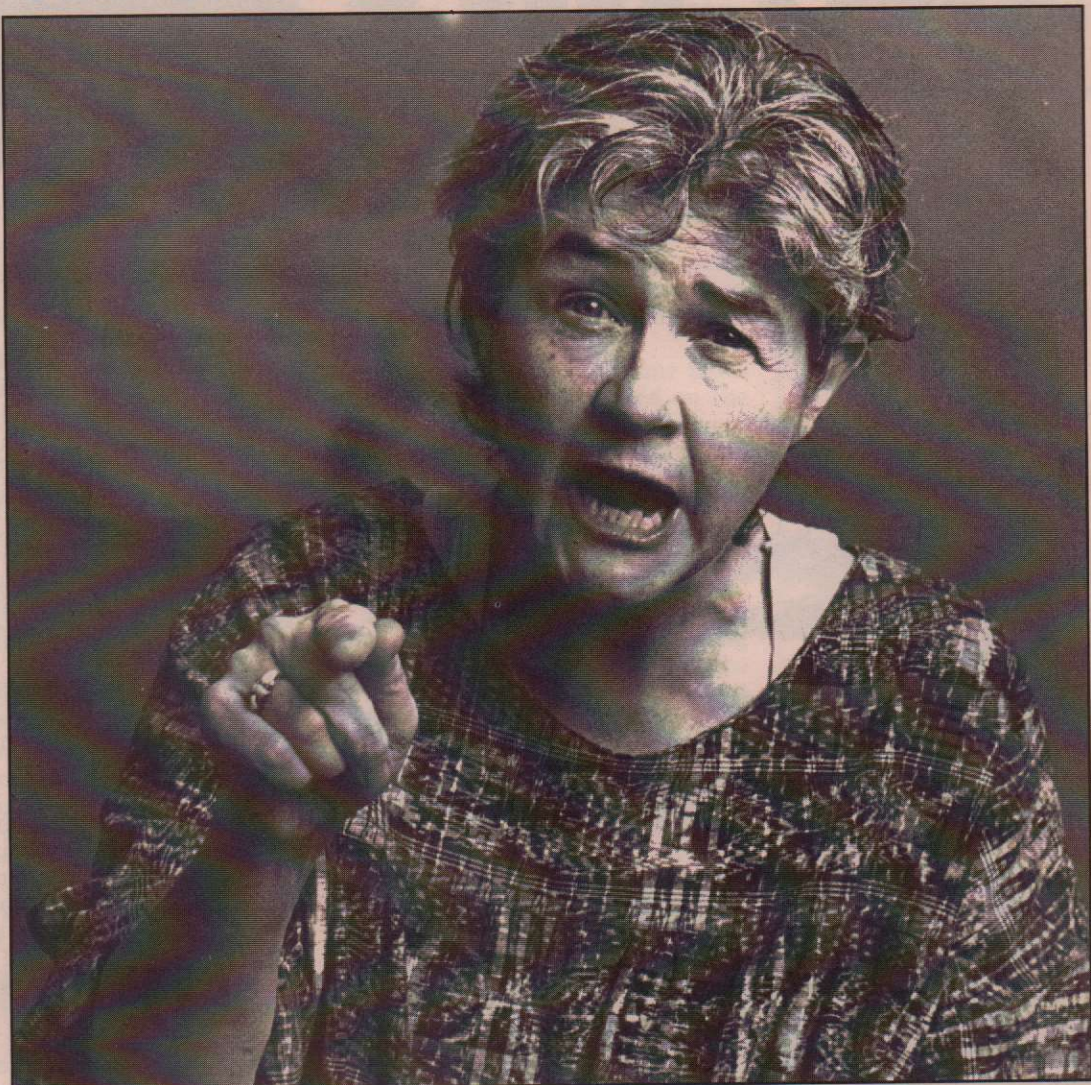
The theory of commodity fetishism — which explains how capitalism conceals from common-sense thinking the reality of the social relationships behind the everyday transactions sustaining human life — is not the most obvious stuff of poetic drama.

In Shawn's text, and Coulter's wonderful performance, it becomes so. True, the author can take his character only to the threshold of the adventure upon which Marx himself embarked when he developed his way of understanding history and society a century and a half ago.

She remains alone, isolated, struggling to identify with 'the poor', and with 'the revolutionaries', without seeing how to overcome her own social situation, her own unwanted lies.

But it is with their anger that she grapples, not simply with their condition. And it is on the history of how things come to be that she wrestles: she does not just observe.

This woman, and this play, will not change the world. But it may move many who feel the need to do so more profoundly than many a political tract. The contradictory power of history,



Clare Coulter in *The Fever*

Photo: Bob Cain

of how it is learnt and of how men and women inescapably carry it with them in the struggle to transcend it, was an underlying theme in some of the best early Fringe shows.

The Wrestling School (The Traverse) brought Howard Barker's *Judith*, an exhaustingly rich encounter with the story in the Apocrypha (appended to some versions of the Bible) of a well-to-do widow (Melanie Jessop) who, with her servant (Jane Bertish), infiltrates the enemy camp and saves Israel by seducing and beheading the cruel Assyrian general, Holfernes (William Chubb).

Liberal theatre

BARKER views the liberal theatre in England, with its post-17th-century tendency to oversimplify ideas and emotions, as sharing with 'fascist art' the characteristic of avoiding the complexities of what being human means. He does not bow before spurious, quasi-democratic charges of 'elitism'; and is

celebrated more abroad than in his native land, where his work has been hysterically attacked by some London critics.

In *Judith*, the integration, under the author's direction, of text (a wrestling indeed on the complex possibilities of the English language), performance and design is near-perfect, virtually complete; but what emerges from this is an experience open to individual response, reflection, and sensuous recollection.

This Judith is no simple hero, no weakly conqueror of tyranny, but a woman of complex motivation, exercising the power of her sexuality over Holfernes and of her social station over the servant on whom she also relies. And she has the power to 'make history', to create her own myth, to lay the burden of further lies on her people even as she liberates them.

There is a quality of Barkeresque violence in the language of Scots writer John Maley, whose *Witch Doctor* — exploring the relationship between a convicted, male, serial killer (Irv-

ing Allan) and a female psychiatrist (Annie George) — was revived at the Famous Grouse House by the talented and original CAT A Theatre company from Glasgow.

Illness alas prevented them from staging Maley's *Friendly Fire*, intriguingly billed as a 'memory play, romance and political thriller set in Moscow'. If this theme from contemporary history is pursued with the writer's apparent determination to get beneath the skin, we can look forward to something as exciting as CAT A's marvellous *No Mean Fighter*, which took the Fringe by storm four years ago.

At The Pleasance, ARTTS International staged Jon Sen's *The Confession*, which focuses on the crisis of a Catholic priest (Michael Montgomery) who learns through the confessional from an IRA fighter (a sensitive, low-key performance by Jerome Tait) about the ending of the ceasefire and of subsequent operations.

Early draft

UNDER-RESEARCHED, and unconvincing in its portrayal of the 'terrorists', Sen's play could be an early draft of a film-script which, with more thought, could say something valuable about Irish nationalism and its relationship to the treatment of the Catholic church by the first modern Protestant nation.

In *The Architect* (The Traverse) Scots playwright David Grieg presents us with Leo Black (Alexander Morton), a man who has conceived his profession as responsible for designing a future which has not come to pass. The high-rise estates have, in practice, been ill-built and have produced discontent, depression, even suicide.

"Good design" isn't the point,' explains the protest leader Sheena (Una McLean). 'The point is control. Who has the power to knock down and who has the power to build.' This, we learn, is the point about Leo's personal life too.

The play is a tightly-worked construct, thoughtfully written and directed (by Philip Howard). It satisfies the intellect more than the emotions. But it too is about the grip of the past in the present, and about overcoming the burden of our lies.



Melanie Jessop as *Judith*

Photo: Stephen Vaughn

The need for a new socialist party

This week we have two responses to the initiative taken by the Workers Revolutionary Party towards the building of a new socialist party. Each week we aim to print a selection of views on this matter.

Anybody interested in taking part in this discussion should mail, fax or e-mail (see back page) your contributions which should be 300-400 words in length.

'We need to win back our slogans'

THE call for a socialist party is very timely. The growth of working-class and community resistance to capitalism's crisis will inevitably throw an incoming Labour government into profound conflicts.

This will shatter the basis of social-democratic politics and pose the necessity for a thorough rebuilding of the labour movement (already long overdue).

This task of reconstruction will involve an array of political forces that will be faced with a number of challenges.

Groups that see themselves as building political vanguards will have to break thoroughly with the sectarianism of the past and learn to work as part of a broader (genuinely vanguard) movement.

There must be a complete break with authoritarian hangovers from Stalinism.

Single issue campaigns will need to understand the nature of the common enemy they all face.

Marxists have a critical role in deepening their analysis of capitalism and its crisis so that the movement can develop an appropriate programme and strategy.

Understanding the nature of the worldwide attacks on living standards and conditions is not easy. Is capitalism propelled towards this confrontation by its inevitable inner logic — or are the rich just becoming more arrogant and greedy, taking advantage of the labour-movement setbacks of recent years?

Critical questions such as these must be argued out in front of the widest possible audience and not restricted to party journals.

Will the movement proposed by the WRP be restricted to those agreeing with the understanding of Marxism held by those in and around the present party — or will it be open to a wider movement?

If the latter is intended, I would suggest an alternative name along the lines of 'Campaign for a Socialist Party', otherwise this movement will attract limited interest.

There will have to be a protracted fight to rehabilitate Marxism after the damage done by Stalinism and other falsifiers.

An important task, for me, is the winning back of slogans such as democracy, liberty and freedom that were central to the socialist struggle at one time, but have been misappropriated by the Right.

We must clarify the class content of these concepts within capitalism and demonstrate in practice that only socialism can give them their truly human meaning.

Daniel Robertson

Workers Press science correspondent

Disappointing article

THE Workers Press front article of 13 July says that the WRP is to 'dissolve itself'.

There is a precedent for this in Italy in the early 1980s. But in the Workers Press article there is no evidence of any fundamental rethink which was such a feature of the Italian movement. For the life of me I cannot understand what it is you propose.

The WRP is to dissolve itself on the formation of a WRP Mark II (?).

I see no re-examination of the fundamental approach you have taken. Your version of Marxism is still rooted in the past and specifically the politics and practice of Bolshevism. It is my firm belief that this movement no longer has any relevance for us today — leaving aside its actual role in historical events.

Any new movement must come to terms with the reality around it. I see no evidence of any such recognition in the article on the front page.

Can you please specifically address the following questions:

■ Is the programme of this new organisation open to debate?

■ What conception of socialism/communism do you advocate?

■ Please spell out clearly and unequivocally if this new organisation is to be based on Bolshevik organisational principles or is this too to be up for debate?

■ What role do you see for a 'state' (however constructed) in a transition period?

You quite correctly criticise Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party — and I mean HIS party — for being organised 'from the top down', but you are in danger of doing the same yourselves unless ALL these questions (and others)

are open and amenable to discussion in your press — it seems to me that the issues have already been decided. If so, you simply do not need to go through the bother of dissolving and then re-inventing yourselves.

You will be aware that other tendencies on the Left are engaged in a process of re-inventing themselves, and I would argue that my comments above could equally apply to them, so please do not feel that I am 'picking on' you unfairly.

More than anything I am anxious to move the discussion away from tactics and onto the fundamental issues that any new movement must address.

Since coming into contact with yourselves around the dockers dispute, I had thought that I detected signs of movement and change in your organisational and political outlook.

From my point of view I should like to encourage this, but I was profoundly disappointed by the front page article on 13 July.

Dave Graham

Liverpool

The conference called last March by Workers Press under the title: 'Crisis in the labour movement — the need for a new socialist party' decided to set up a steering committee to continue its work.

■ NEXT MEETING: 7.30pm, Tuesday 3 September, Room 301 Gray's Inn Centre, Sidmouth Street, London WC1 8JB. (Nearest tubes King's Cross or Russell Square.) More information from the Coordinator, Steve Ballard, 0181-889 7255.

Bronwen Handyside reports

Two nations

Sewer journalism

LAST week the tabloids sold a lot of papers by hunting down a young woman who had chosen to abort one of her twin foetuses because she could not afford to bring both of them into the world.

Leave aside the fact that such 'selective' terminations have already taken place at least 200 times in Britain, in the period before IVF clinics were legally restricted to implanting no more than three embryos.

This is common knowledge in at least the fertility side of the medical world, if not in all of it, and was, and is, accepted practice in multiple pregnancies. A tabloid journalist could have found this out simply by lifting a phone. (But does it sell newspapers?)

Let us also leave aside the fact that the woman had originally asked for a simple abortion — not a news story, 400 take place every day. She was persuaded by her doctor to have the selective termination, and then he went on to tell her story to the *Sunday Express*. And let us leave aside (for the moment) the fact that the young woman, a single mother with one child already, could not afford to have two more children.

The most extraordinary facet of the whole sorry situation is that anti-abortion groups were able to go to court, when it was thought that the termination had not yet taken place, and obtain an injunction to stop the operation.

A group of people who had never so much as spoken to this woman were able to take control of her body. This is an adult human being, perfectly sane, and in possession of all her faculties.

Feminists often state that reactionary regimes ban abortion because it is a means of control over women. If a woman cannot control even her own body, how can she aspire — or have the opportunity — to control anything else.

It is pointed out in illustration that abortion is forbidden under these regimes, but is only unobtainable to the women of the lower classes.

I think the Right's obsession with abortion is less conscious than this. It is most often, if not always, to do with backward, religious conceptions — and contains a consequent profound hostility to scientific thinking, to the idea that the processes of nature can be understood and controlled by human beings.

That is why Professor Jack Scarisbrick, of the anti-abortion campaign 'Life', can say of the woman who is carrying eight foetuses after fertility treatment:

'She will undoubtedly lose some of these embryos without resorting to the knife. If eight survived it would be unparalleled, but life is life; if she has many children she will be a celebrity and they will be taken care of.'

Professor Scarisbrick is not a professor of medicine, but of history (which is why he refers to the 'knife' when selective terminations are carried out by injection).

All the medical opinions expressed on this unfortunate woman's situation say that not only is she putting her own health to risk, the chances of carrying the babies to full term is zero, and consequently the chances of even one of them surviving is also close to zero.

The risk of diseases of pregnancy, premature labour, brain-damaged babies and maternal death is increased substantially by a twin pregnancy, let alone an octuplet.

That is why fertility clinics, who produce the highest percentage of multiple births, restrict

implanted. Many will not risk more than two.

Mandy Allwood's transformation into a media product will most likely not only ruin her chances of having even one healthy baby, but will most likely put her own life at risk. This seems to me to be barbaric.

The permanent profession

A WEEK before the abortion frenzy, a 'debate' was fomented over a call by two chief constables to legalise brothels.

Pauline Clare, the first ever woman chief constable, said:

'It is a fact that prostitutes have been around for many, many years and there's obviously a need for the services that they provide.'

In the same week, tucked away on the back pages, some papers ran a story put out by the International Labour Organisation, which showed that women's average pay levels worldwide range between 50 and 80 per cent of men's.

The *Observer* (11 August) ran a report which said that the gap between rich and poor in Britain is now as wide as it is in Nigeria, and that the poor are suffering from malnutrition on a scale not seen since the 'hungry 30s'.

In the article, a mother of two explains how she survives with two part-time jobs and family credit. After paying rent, heating, school dinners, council tax and water rates she is left with just enough to buy food.

'With just £10 more a week, I think I could cope really well' she said. 'Some women have turned to prostitution and you can't blame them.'

I would say to both chief constables, and all those who think that prostitution will always be with us — instead of institutionalising brothels, why not pull out all the stops to change the unequal economic relations between the classes, and between the sexes.

And PS: Don't ever let anybody tell you women choose prostitution as a career of their own free will.

Any dirty chimneys?

DIGBY ANDERSON had a brain-wave while sunning himself on a Turkish beach, guzzling snacks and drinks peddled by children.

'You sit on your deckchair, and when you are hungry or thirsty, just raise an arm — and there is someone to serve you,' he wrote in *The Times*, 12 June. (Funnily enough, the not unconnected savage state repression of the whole of the Turkish population seems to have passed him by.)

Inspired, he proposes to send British children to work as well. In Digby's opinion, this will solve many problems at a single blow. The kids will be gainfully employed, learning discipline, and saved from the 'sink schools' that everybody keeps carping about.

More importantly, it will solve the problem of people like Digby, who explains: 'Ever since the unemployment of the 1980s it has been impossible for people to find help in the house or with routine gardening jobs. Retailers especially cannot find suitable low-grade help.'

And what about those hard-to-clean chimneys, and those fine-weave carpets — the possibilities are endless.

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

Television

Strikers who clipped the Empire's wings

AT the end of World War II, most working people had high hopes of the Labour government. Things were going to be different, they said.

In 1946 the government was evicting homeless families squatting in central London, and the RAF was on strike in the East.

Channel 4's *Secret History: Mutiny in the RAF* (Thursday 8 August) uncovered some of the political background and personal stories to the RAF strike.

The war was over, and thousands of servicemen were looking to being demobbed and going back home. The charm of exotic places had worn thin.

The officers might be accommodated in palaces, but the men were in awful conditions and their food was foul. Many were workers, who just wanted to get back to civvy street and rebuild their lives.

One man recalled his feelings as a young newly-wed, anxious to return to his wife, and his growing anger.

Why were they being kept out there? They were told there weren't the ships available to bring them home, but sailors said ships were going back empty.

One reason, it seemed, was that RAF ground crews could be used as cheap labour for maintaining British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) planes re-opening routes to the Far East.

Another was seen when British forces were sent into Vietnam and Indonesia to suppress national liberation movements.

On 17 January 1946, RAF men based at Karachi and other bases sent a petition to prime minister Clement Attlee.

'Why cannot demobilisation be speeded up?', they asked. 'Is it because of Britain's foreign policy?'

Labour's Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, seen at the front in the picture of Attlee's cabinet, had been promoted by the FO and



Clement Attlee celebrates Labour's 1945 victory

sive anti-Soviet policy might persuade the US administration to shore up the Empire in return for use of RAF bases.

Although the programme did not pursue this, it did quote Labour's Minister for War (and 1930s Stalinist) John Strachey, writing to the chief of air staff in October 1945, to say that 'a relatively large RAF and small army is by far the best way of keeping our world commitments'.

Indian mutiny

FOR ex-sergeant John Saville, who witnessed British troops killing Indian civilians on the streets, it was clear what those 'commitments' were.

And whereas at first the authorities had ordered Indian troops to move against the RAF strikers, the strike spread not only throughout the RAF stations but to the Royal Indian Air Force too.

When the Indian Navy

they were threatened with RAF bombers. This only added to unrest in the RAF.

'We do not wish our demobilisation to be delayed while we are used for imperialist foreign policy,' they said.

The officer caste had never been comfortable with the wartime political education and discussions (credited with contributing to Labour's 1945 win), and they had the government's backing to crush the 'mutineers'. At one base the CO threatened 'if you do not return to work I will select ten men and execute them'.

Elsewhere, the men took the wise precaution of ensuring the strike committee held the armoury keys.

The strike spread from base to base as fast as the news. There were radio contacts, and mass meetings in hangars. Planes arrived with simple messages like 'Singapore out' scrawled on

Forced to make concessions, the authorities were nevertheless determined to punish someone. The forces' Special Investigation Branch (SIB) was sent out from London, with Foreign Office instructions to look for the 'Reds'.

At Cawnpore, Jimmy Stone was interrogated, and told he could 'forget your wife and daughter' back in London.

While others were returning home, the alleged 'ringleaders' — one of them seized as he stepped up the gangplank — were thrown into rat-infested cells.

Norrie Cymbalist, an East End Jewish airman who had volunteered in the hope of fighting fascism, was singled out for a ten-year sentence.

Apparently his heinous crime was to have jumped on to a lorry and incited the men, referring sarcastically to the officers as 'these gentlemen — at least that's what the air force calls them...'

Sent home

BACK in Britain, the campaign for Cymbalist's release was taken up by his mates and by the trade unions, and he was eventually sent back home but without his 'wings'. His daughter recalls how much this upset him.

It was good to see the jailed men's daughters and the one surviving RAF prisoner, Arthur Attwood, speaking with dignity and resolve about what happened.

When I met Arthur Attwood a couple of years ago at the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union conference, he'd been doing a sponsored long-distance walk, for the *New Worker* I think it was, and leaving aside differences, it's good to see him going strong!

The makers of this programme are to be congratulated on bringing some of Britain's hidden, important history to light, and enabling some real heroes of the working class to show up the so-called 'Labour leaders' for

Indonesia's opposition centre-stage

INDONESIAN police have accused a 26 year-old left-winger of organising riots that swept Jakarta at the end of last month. Budiman Sudjatmiko, of the People's Democratic Party (PRD) was arrested with nine others in a week-long round up. The army claims the PRD has links with the long-suppressed Indonesian Communist Party.

BY GEOFF PILLING

At least four people were killed and hundreds injured as state forces put down the riots, sparked off when police and troops stormed the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), where a series of free speech forums had been held.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of the PDI, had to undergo lengthy questioning at Jakarta police headquarters last week. Later police questioned her sister, Sukmawati, and prize-winning writer Praemodya Ananta Toer, most of whose writings are banned for alleged 'Marxist' influence.

Mukhtar Pakpahan, leader of the autonomous workers' union SBSI, has been charged with subversion following the riots.

General Suharto, who seized power in Indonesia 30 years ago, pressed nationalist and Christian groups together into the PDI in 1973, at the same time as herding Muslim parties into the PPP. With his own military-run GOLKAR monopolising official positions and privileges, Suharto wanted a three-party 'democratic' facade for his dictatorship.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's first president, was initially reluctant to get involved, but in the late 1980s, the PDI's chairman, Soerjadi, persuaded her to join so the party could boost its prestige with the Sukarno name.

Some prominent armed forces officers, discontented with GOLKAR, started encouraging the PDI as an alternative. Then things got out of hand. At the PDI's 1993 congress, there was an upsurge of support for Megawati as chair.

Witch-hunt

Despite, or perhaps because of, a government-backed witch-hunt alleging 'communists' in the PDI, its popularity grew, particularly with the young.

It was reported that up to 20 million first-time voters might vote for the PDI in general elections due next May. Megawati might stand for the presidency in 1998.

Suharto wants to stand for a seventh term. He will be 77. When he flew to Germany for a health check-up, shares plunged on the Jakarta stock-market, and the Indonesian rupiah fell through-out south-east Asia.

The Far Eastern Economic

Review ran an editorial: 'Success and succession, preparing Indonesia for after Suharto'. 'Après Suharto' was the *Economist's* theme. 'Suharto's grip is loosening: Who will come next?', wondered *Business Week* nervously.

Their concern is understandable. On 18 and 19 June some 1,500 workers at PT Indoshoes downed tools and marched on parliament, where they staged an all-night sit-in until evicted by riot police.

The west Java factory, owned by the powerful Salim family, produces 2.7 million pairs of shoes a year for big-name firms like Reebok and Adidas.

Demanding

As well as demanding better pay and conditions, the workers called for political change, one of their representatives voicing support for Megawati.

On 3 July, there were riots in Nabire, West Papua, which is under Indonesian occupation. Youth and students set fire to government buildings and the GOLKAR party headquarters, and stormed the prison, releasing 40 prisoners.

Freeport-RTZ, operating the world's biggest gold and copper mining complex, in Timika, West Papua, has failed in attempts to buy off tribal leaders after riots last March.

They are suing the company in US courts over land-grabbing and pollution.

On 9 July, 15,000 workers walked out of factories in Surabaya, east Java, and joined by students, marched with banners demanding 'Rp7,000 minimum wage', and 'Bring down prices'.

A People's Democratic Party (PRD) leaflet called for the military to get out of labour and political affairs, and supported Megawati for president. Riot police charged a group whose banner said 'Cabut Dwi Fungsi ABRI' — Abolish the military's dual function.

Dita Sari, 24, chair of the Centre for Workers' Struggle (PPBI), was arrested, charged under Article 160 of the criminal code with inciting hatred of the government, and could face a jail sentence.

Major General Imam Oetomo, the military commander of east

Java, accused strike 'instigators' of wanting to change the constitution, and replace the state *Pancasila* ideology. 'PRD is clearly socialist in nature and is trying to revive communism.' As the deadline neared for election nominations, the military had moved.

General Tanjung, the armed forces commander-in-chief, encouraged dissident PDI members to hold a congress in Sumatra, under armed guard, at which Soerjadi was reinstated as leader.

Editors summonsed to the Ministry of Information were told to refer to Megawati by her husband's surname, not as

Sukarnoputri, Sukarno's daughter.

Megawati's supporters held rallies and marches. On 11 July thousands gathered at the monument where Sukarno proclaimed Indonesia's independence on 17 August 1945.

Around 300 PDI members loyal to Megawati guarded the party's headquarters, and held free forums in which trade unionists and left-wingers took part.

At dawn on 27 July the building was stormed by 800 Soerjadi supporters — soldiers dressed in red PDI shirts and headbands —

backed by uniformed police and troops. The riots followed. The government got to use its British-made Tactica armoured water cannon (made by Glover Webb, a GKN subsidiary in Hampshire), Saracens and Scorpion tanks.

The irony was, that in trying to crush liberal opposition like Megawati — who tries to fight back with litigation — the regime risked strengthening those really on the left.

With fewer than 1,000 members, the Democratic People's Party and its trade union allies have been thrust onto centre-stage.



Megawati Sukarnoputri



Defiant demonstrators facing Indonesian security forces

Help Ukraine workers

TENS of thousands of miners in eastern Ukraine have been on strike since the beginning of July demanding wages owing from April. Conditions in the city of Donetsk, in particular, are increasingly desperate and the miners have several times blockaded railways and main roads.

In the last few weeks a number of strike leaders have been arrested and held without charge. Three are still being held in jail: Mikhail Krilov, one of the joint presidents of the Donetsk City Workers' Committee, Pyotr Kit of Krasnodon and Mikhail Skirinsky of Krasnodon. Krilov has been held since 1 August in Kharkov, 300km from his home, despite protests from lawyers, trade unionists and his family.

In Krasnodon the miners agreed to return to work if their colleagues were released, but after work resumed the two men continued to be detained.

The Donetsk arbitration court has been presented with a legal petition by the authorities to outlaw and disband the Donetsk City Workers' Committee, one of the central strike-organising bodies.

The late payment of wages brings daily misery to millions of people in the former Soviet Union. It has led to bitter strikes by miners in the Russian far east and Rostov, southern Russia, as well as in Ukraine.

Tower Hamlets trades council in east London, which has previously initiated links with Russian and Ukrainian workers' organisations, is calling for protests to be sent to the Ukrainian ambassador, urging the release of those detained and a cessation of legal action. Copies should be sent to the Donetsk City Workers' Committee and to Tower Hamlets trades council.

Response

A rapid response is important. Messages sent before 18 August, when a mass miners' meeting is to be held in Donetsk, would be especially well received — although, of course, they should continue to be sent after that.

■ Ukrainian ambassador: Professor Sergei Komisarenko, Ukrainian Embassy, 78 Kensington Park Road, London W11 2PL. Fax: 0171-792 1708.

■ Donetsk City Strike Committee. Tel/fax: 00 38 0622 932155 or 00 38 0622 905447.

■ Tower Hamlets trades council. Tel: 0181-555 7045. Fax: 0181-981 0881.

■ The first information that Ukrainian miners had been imprisoned in connection with strike action taken between 3 and 18 July came from Jan Talpe in Belgium. Fax: 00 32 2 520 14 59. E-mail: jant.talpe@infoboard.be.

Serb refugee challenge to Milosevic

BELGRADE — 30 Serb refugees from Croatia have begun a legal action against the Serbian government, accusing it of forcing them to fight in Bosnia.

Natasa Kandic, director of the Humanitarian Law Foundation (HLF), says the 30 men were among some 40,000 refugees press-ganged in Serbia and transported to the front lines. They are suing the Milosevic government for violating international conventions, which Yugoslavia ratified, on the status of refugees.

Around 250,000 Serbs fled the Krajina border regions of Croatia last year when Croatian forces stormed the breakaway territory.

The Belgrade paper *Nasa Borba* says that as refugees began arriving in Serbia, local police rounded up men from the refugee columns and reception centres, raided apartments and combed city streets in the hunt for able-bodied 'volunteers'.

Most of the conscripts were taken to military centres across

the border with Bosnia where they were forcibly 'trained' in camps run by Zeljko 'Arkan' Ratkovovic's Serb Volunteer Guard *Nasa Borba* says.

The case taken by these Krajina Serbs confirms the picture which Workers Press reported last year ('Beaten, handcuffed and sent to war', Workers Press, July 1995), with the added detail that the press-ganging continued after the fall of Krajina, and that the infamous 'Arkan', responsible for numerous crimes in Croatia and Bosnia, continued to enjoy the backing of the Serbian government.

Pretence

The refugees' case is embarrassing, not just for Milosevic, for those governments who with Britain in the lead, accept the Serbian regime's pretence of having nothing to do with war in Bosnia or war criminals like 'Arkan', so they could do business with Milosevic as a 'peacemaker'.

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