

MILLIONS ON POVERTY PAY



Family holds prison murder protest

FAMILY and friends of Norman Washington Manning, known as 'Bunson', are campaigning for a full public inquiry into his murder in Long Lartin prison.

Norman was stabbed to death on 29 September. The murder followed an incident the previous evening when two white prisoners disrupted an African-Caribbean studies class. So far as is known, nobody has been charged.

Norman leaves a common-law wife,

Yvette, seen (centre) leading a protest in Birmingham on 5 November, and five children. The family are dissatisfied with answers they have received from the governor of Long Lartin, and say they want the truth, and justice.

For further information on the campaign, call 0585 158207, or write to Norman Washington Manning (Bunson) Memorial Campaign, c/o 102 Heathfield Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1HJ. Photo: Mark Salmon

Workers Aid for Bosnia Bazaar

Saturday 10 December
2pm, Bryant Street

Community Centre, London E15

Items required are: cakes or other items for the homemade stall, toys, books and records, prizes for the tombola, bric-à-brac, plants, good jumble, small toys for the lucky dip.

Contact: Jill Oxley on 081-555 7045.

FIVE MILLION workers in Britain are now struggling to live on poverty pay. The latest figures show that 32.7 per cent of all workers are paid wages below the 'decency level' set by the Council of Europe.

The figures come from a survey undertaken by the Commons library for the Labour MP for Darlington, Alan Milburn. It shows that the number of people below the 'decency level' — fixed at 68 per cent of average gross weekly earnings — has shot up 25 per cent since the Tories took office in 1979.

Decency

A further 4.5 million part-timers are also earning wages below the decency level, the Low Pay Unit reports.

So almost 10 million people in

work are actually living in poverty.

Add to this the unemployed, the sick, and the elderly and the figure is swollen by millions more.

The situation will get worse next year. The job seeker's allowance is due to replace unemployment benefit.

'This means that more and more people will be forced into

low-paid work,' says the Low Pay Unit.

The biggest rise in poverty wages has come in East Anglia, where the numbers have risen 54 per cent since 1979.

Other areas recording big rises include Wales (up 35 per cent), Yorkshire and Humberside (up 31 per cent), the South West (up 32 per cent) and Scotland (up 23 per cent).

Essential

With the average wage in Britain about £312, the decency threshold is £212, or about £5.90 an hour.

This makes the demand for a legal minimum wage of £6 an hour for a 40-hour week essential if millions of workers and their families have any chance of living in anything like decent conditions.

Gas bosses hit jackpot

BRITISH GAS chief Cederic Brown has grabbed himself a pay increase of 75 per cent, rocketing his salary up to £475,000 a year. Other top executives will get similar pay rises.

'It's like winning the lottery without a ticket,' said one worker entering the company's London headquarters.

Slashed

Meanwhile thousands of British Gas jobs are being slashed and workers in the firm's retail division, including those who staff its high street

stores, have been warned to expect pay cuts of up to 15 per cent in a drive to improve competitiveness.

The Labour leaders made the usual ritual noises about the 'outrage'. But when the announcement was first made Labour front-benchers had been warned to be cautious, in case any attack on Brown's salary boost upset the City.

Only when it became clear that the City was unhappy with the increase did Labour speak out.

But nobody should be fooled. Blair's protests are sheer

hypocrisy. For Labour has made clear that there will be no renationalisation of British Gas by a future Labour government.

Scandal

This latest scandal gives added urgency to the fight for Clause Four within the Labour movement. The demand must be for the renationalisation of British Gas and all the other privatised industries, but with not a penny compensation to those lining their pockets at the expense of millions of workers and their families.

The struggle for socialism in Africa

A **HIGHLY** successful seminar on 'The Struggle for Socialism in Africa' was held in London last weekend.

Organised jointly by the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International and the African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC), it was attended by people from Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, Angola, South Africa and Britain.

Those attending reached a

high measure of agreement in their analyses of the present situation in Africa and the tasks ahead.

Four papers were presented to the seminar. Two, by members of ALISC, dealt with 'Imperialism and the new scramble for the re-colonisation of Africa' and 'The dialectics of national liberation, democracy and socialism in the perspective of the African Revolution'.

Members of the Workers International presented two papers: 'The crisis of imperialism today, with some reflections on the situation in Africa' and 'Some reflections on the theory of Permanent Revolution'.

It was agreed that the proceedings of the seminar should be published and that further steps towards closer political collaboration discussed in the immediate future.

The Tuzla conference

WORKERS Press and the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International welcomed the conference called in Tuzla on 12-14 November (see pages 4,5, and 6). But we were unable to sign the final statement issued by the conference.

We shared the same aims as many at the conference — a multi-cultural and independent Bosnia.

But we could not accept important parts of the final statement.

The final statement calls upon 'democratic, multi-cultural and anti-fascist Europe' to come to the aid of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But there is no such Europe. Europe is dominated by the same bankers and industrialists who want to carve up the former Yugoslavia.

It is a Europe in which some 30 million are unemployed. Many of them are young, and many of them will never work again.

It is a Europe of growing poverty and homelessness. Some 40,000 people spend every night on the streets of London, with 10,000 in Paris in a similar situation.

It is a Europe in which the ruling class deliberately whips up racist attacks against migrant workers and those fleeing persecution, including those forced to escape from the former Yugoslavia.

But is also a Europe of millions of workers. In the last resort here are the real friends of the Bosnian workers and people.

The statement called upon the United Nations Protection Force to ensure that humanitarian routes, especially the Northern Route — the most direct into Bosnia-Herzegovina — are opened and that Tuzla airport be reopened.

In the absence of powerful support from the workers outside the ex-Yugoslavia it is understandable that such demands be placed on the UN.

But it is precisely the United Nations that has prevented the opening of these routes and the airport. In fact the United Nations acts more and more openly as an army of occupation on behalf of the Great Powers.

That is why the United Nations forces are almost universally hated throughout Bosnia, particularly amongst workers. Whatever differences there are amongst the Great Powers they are united on one thing. They are determined that the fate of the Balkans will not be decided by the workers and oppressed of the region.

We went to the Tuzla conference to discuss with all those who want to defend Bosnia from the fascist-like attack launched by Serbia as well as from the imperialist plots being hatched against the country.

Unlike certain others in the movement we do not consider it our task to toss advice over the wall from the outside about how the struggle should be conducted. We think that the main responsibility of those in Britain is to fight for the maximum solidarity in the workers' movement with the struggle in Bosnia.

It was in that spirit that we went to Tuzla and in that spirit that we will continue the discussion with those who participated there.

* * * * *

Labour's education U-turn

LABOUR'S acceptance of Tory league tables for schools is the latest betrayal by the Blair leadership of the Labour Party.

Leaders of the biggest teachers' union, the NUT, have rightly denounced the move by Labour's education spokesman, David Blunkett.

Significantly, Blunkett's move was immediately welcomed by Education Secretary Gillian Shephard as 'an enormous U-turn in Labour policy'.

Shephard said that the NUT 'should think very carefully before deciding whether or not to continue their boycott'.

'What I am concerned about is that the Labour Party adopt policies which affect education that are based on views they adopt without adequately consulting the profession' NUT general secretary Doug McAvoy said.

The NUT has refused to implement the Tory tables on the grounds that they would pit school against school.

A spokesman for the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers said that tables were divisive and 'simply a device with which to whip teachers'.

The more unpopular the Tories become and the more acute their internal crisis, the more the Labour leaders huddle to the right.

Letters

Sick joke

THE havoc the Tories have wreaked in the National Health Service is no joke, but I thought Workers Press readers might like to see the following, which has been circulating among hos-

pital staff and students. (The original's longer, I've just picked out a some samples.)

Virginia Bottomley's Knowledge of Healthcare

Artery: the study of painting Caesarian section: a neighbourhood in Rome

Cauterise: made eye contact with her

Dilate: to live long (and prosper)

Fibula: a small lie

Genital: not a Jew

Labour pain: getting hurt at work

Morbid: a higher offer

Nitrates: cheaper than day rates

Post operative: letter carrier

Recovery room: a place to do

upholstery
Seizure: Roman emperor
Terminal illness: getting sick at the airport

Vein: concealed

Maybe other readers will have some suggestions for additions, or alternative definitions, in the same (true blue) vein (or 'conceited')?

Lyn

North's slanders repeated

THE US Workers League's slanderous allegations against Workers Aid for Bosnia have found followers in Greece.

In their latest paper the Communist International Union (which split from the former WRP) has reprinted those allegations.

They say that David North, the leader of the Workers

League, accuses Workers Aid of 'conveying not just food and medical equipment, but also military and satellite equipment to [Bosnian President] Izetbegovic's Muslims, the vassals of imperialism....'

'[T]he Workers Aid campaign was split by accusations over the question of transporting satellite means of communication'.

It concludes: '[We] don't know what exactly happened... We would not be surprised if the so-called Workers Aid was used as a cover for transporting military equipment... The most likely

explanation is that the allegations are true'.

These accusations have already been answered in a Workers Aid pamphlet, which is available in Greek.

This group, by repeating these slanders, has abandoned internationalism and Marxism.

They refuse self-determination for the Macedonian people, call nationalist marches against Macedonia 'healthy anti-imperialist reactions of youth', and accuse the conservative ex-prime minister of betraying national rights, all under the slogan 'Greco-Serbian Alliance for Socialist Federation'.

News in brief

Work is now a risk to life

BRITAIN is becoming a nation of zombies risking death and injury because of overwork, the pressure group Hazards has warned.

The group said that a large number of deaths at work could be blamed on excessive workloads.

There have already been a number of deaths in Britain attributed to overwork, but the government watchdog organisation, the Health and Safety Executive, maintains that overwork and long hours are not health-and-safety issues and refuses to take action, says Hazards magazine editor Rory O'Neill.

■ In January 1994, hospital doctor Alan Massie died after completing an 86-hour shift;

■ In March this year, Joan Simmonds blamed the suicide of her husband Joseph on overwork and pressure of work. The Wolverhampton teacher had been off sick because of depression.

■ Only last week the courts found in favour of social worker John Walker, who is suing Northumberland county council for causing him two nervous breakdowns.

■ Hazards' O'Neill pointed to the situation in Japan, where up to 10,000 deaths a year could be attributed to *karoshi*, or overwork.

The problem is so serious that the Japanese government has now agreed to pay

compensation in cases of overwork.

Tube rail fare rip-off

RAIL fares will rise in the new year by up to 9 per cent — more than three times the rate of inflation.

The lowest fare on London's underground will be £1. Travelcards will go up by 9 per cent.

London Underground alone will rake in an extra £45 million from the increases.

Rail minister John Watts said that underground passengers not taxpayers should pay for dearer transport. In fact the rises are partly to pay for the £700 million squandered on privatisation.

A Central Rail Users Consultative Committee spokesperson said the increases were a 'double whammy' for passengers, who are now asked to pay more for a worsening service.

Blair's early move

LABOUR leader Tony Blair is to produce a draft document to get rid of Clause Four earlier than expected, he told a party policy forum in Cardiff at the weekend.

Worried about the possibility of a movement developing to defend the clause — the section of Labour's programme committing it to the nationalisation of basic in-

dustries — Blair obviously wants to rush the matter through the party.

Rich pickings

MIDDLEMEN are pocketing £32 million in profit from local government services under the contracting-out system, the GMB general union calculates.

Over £116 million went to firms operating in south-east England.

The union has discovered that 72 per cent of the contracts under compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) have gone to the top 20 contractors, of which eight give money to the Tory Party.

The union calculates that the £365 million worth of contracts awarded under CCT would give 7,000 more home helps or 7,000 extra school-meals staff.

Students hit by loans

THE breakdown of the applications system at the Student Loans Company has left a third of a million students to face hardship and delay, the National Union of Students has charged.

The NUS says that students are already facing a financial crisis because of a 10 per cent cut in grants and those wanting to take up a loan now face mounting delays.

The company cannot guarantee that the rising backlog of applications will be completed before the Christmas holidays, when students are now barred from claiming benefits.

Defend Clause 4 campaign! Defend Socialism!

■ Rally in House of Commons, London SW1, Wednesday 30 November, Committee Room 14, 8pm. Speakers include National Union of Mineworkers president Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner MP.

■ Camden Labour Left: Which way forward for Labour? Monday 28 November, 7.30pm, Swiss Cottage Community Centre, 9 Winchester Road, London NW3. Speaker: former Lambeth councillor Ted Knight.

■ Campaign's National Steering Committee. Sunday 4 December, 12noon-3pm. Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1. Nearest tube: King's Cross. Open to all. Voting is by those affiliated from their organisations.

Please send all the information you can on the campaign to Workers Press about forthcoming meetings, or send us reports, discussions, pictures, etc.

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Send your New Year's greetings

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year, and the following week is New Year. That is the opportunity for you and your organisation to put your New Year's greeting in the Friday 30 December edition of Workers Press.

It's your organisation's opportunity to get your message to activists — what you hope to see happen in the New Year, and what your policies and aims will be in 1995.

The closing date for us to receive your greeting for the New Year issue is Friday 16 December.


We need to know the text of your message and receive any artwork for logos, etc., by that date.

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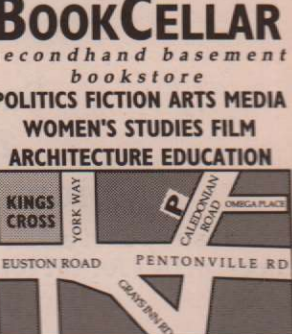
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Market forces hit another bus service

BY ROY THOMAS

WHAT a way to run an industry. That is what the people of Darlington are saying now that Darlington Transport Company (DTC) has gone bust — just as the council-owned bus company was about to be sold.

Bonus

Instead of paying £1.5 million to £2 million for DTC, the private bus company Stagecoach has driven it off the streets. Stagecoach advertised for bus drivers, offering a £1,000 sign-on bonus and 3 per cent higher wages than DTC.

Seventy of the DTC drivers took up the offer. On 7 November Stagecoach began to run a

free bus service in the area, planned to continue until 12 December.

But after less than a week DTC's losses were running at £30,000 per week. In the words of the local council officer handling the sale of the company, 'the financial viability of DTC has been smashed beyond repair'. The receivers were called in — another job for accountants Touche Ross.

The three companies in the market to buy DTC have now dropped out, as there is nothing left to buy.

The cost to Stagecoach of smashing DTC and driving it off the road is thought to have been £25,000 per week, a great deal less than buying it.

Before 1986, when bus services were deregulated, 50 buses were needed in Darlington

to provide a service. In the past few weeks bus movement has reached 300 buses per hour along the main shopping street.

The residents of Springwell Terrace were forced to erect a barricade to stop the flow of buses down the street because they said most of them are old, noisy and sending out thick black smoke.

Stake

So Stagecoach adds another town's buses to its list. It has already taken a 20 per cent stake in Strathclyde Buses and Kelvin Central for £8.3 million, and bought the Clydeside 2000 depot at Thornliebank.

Just to underline the frenzied buying and selling of bus companies, it seems that British Bus

has bought the rest of the Clydeside 2000 bus company.

Many of the companies, like some in England and Wales, were, when it came to privatisation, involved in employee share ownership (ESOP). The benefit, so bus workers were told, was that they would gain control, or a say in the control, of their company. It is clear now what nonsense this was.

Stagecoach and British Bus have been buying up employee-owned companies, like those in Scotland, all over Britain. Unless, of course, it is easier and cheaper to drive them off the road as in Darlington.

This is what market forces means, but you can guarantee that the passengers of Darlington will pay the full price in their fares for years to come.

Leicester backs S. Africa protest

TRADES unionists in Leicester have given their backing to the South African Concerned Workers Committee Against Undemocratic Practices in the Unions, which is fighting for reinstatement of Sahied Mohammed (Mo), a Trotskyist sacked from his post as an organiser for the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union.

Mo was sacked on 17 May, for supporting the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International and campaigning for the party in the South African elections. The union leadership backed the African National Congress.

Workers and shop stewards protested, pointing out that Mo had carried out his union duties effectively, working for his party in his spare time. But the union replied that there were 'no fixed hours' for union officers!

In other words, no political freedom. The Concerned Workers Committee says the sacking is

an example of Stalinist methods.

In a letter to the South African union and to Sam Shilowa of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), condemning harassment of those who stood for independent socialist policies, Leicester and District Trades Union Council compares Mo's treatment with that of David Kitson, expelled from the ANC without charge.

'Leicester and District Trades Union Council fully supports the position taken by the Concerned Workers' Committee', the trades council says.

'The treatment of Mo is unacceptable, and the point was made in discussion that such treatment is in strong contrast to the friendly and amicable relationships that have appeared between leaders of the ANC and members of the old apartheid regime, including those responsible for the torture and murder of black freedom fighters in the struggle against apartheid.'

Moscow honours Trotsky

ALTHOUGH there have been previous meetings commemorating Trotsky in Moscow, the first full conference on Trotsky's work was held in Russia on 10-12 November.

The conference, at the Institute of Economics, which is part of the Russian Academy of Sciences, included Russians, Byelorussians and Ukrainians. A number of participants also came from the US, Britain, France and Greece.

That this event took place at all was significant. For some years it has been possible to present Trotsky in a favourable light and to research aspects of his life and work.

However Trotsky and Trotskyism have now moved beyond the stage of merely being legitimate. They are open to serious and critical examination. The ideas are both entering the intellectual life of Russia and becoming part of its political world.

Studies

At the conference, scholars from the former Soviet Union were able to discuss their research in an international forum and join a serious assessment of Trotsky's role in Russian and world history.

The topics debated were wide-ranging. They included broad questions, like Trotsky's overall characterisation of the USSR, as well as more specific studies like one of Trotsky and the Ukraine.

The first contribution came from one of the key organisers, Professor Voeykov of the institute. His warm welcome set the tone for a serious international meeting combining academics and political activists.

He pointed out that previously history students in Russia were told nothing about Trotsky

except that he wanted to export revolution at gunpoint. Now people are starting to read Trotsky and see through the falsifications. He recognised the impossibility of understanding Russia without understanding Trotsky.

Voeykov said that at the beginning of perestroika Bukharin was seen as the alternative to Stalin. Bukharinism was convenient for the initiators of perestroika because Bukharin did not try to break the bureaucracy but to work within it.

Professor Voeykov now saw that Trotskyism was the real alternative because Trotsky tried to fight the bureaucracy. The first step, for Trotsky, was the fight for democracy within the party.

Nature

Hillel Ticktin, from Glasgow University, not only helped organise the event but also presented a major paper for discussion. His paper reflected on Trotsky's views on the Soviet Union.

Ticktin argued that Trotsky was the most dialectical thinker since Marx. This did not lead him to uncritical admiration for Trotsky: he suggested that Trotsky's analysis had not reached the fundamental nature of the Soviet Union.

An interesting part of the conference was the 'round table discussion' between Trotskyists about the way forward. It was especially encouraging to see the extreme youth of most participants from the former USSR.

There are not many Trotskyists in Russia and its neighbouring states. However they make up for their numbers by their enthusiasm, energy, and the seriousness with which they treat Marxism.

Other contributions included



Left to right on the platform at the Moscow conference: Russian Trotskyist Alexii Gusev, Prof Voeykov and Hillel Ticktin

one from Simon Pirani on Trotsky and the Trotskyists in China and Vietnam. Jim Miles, a member of the editorial board of the American periodical 'Bultnam. Jim Miles, a member of the editorial board of the American periodical 'Bulletin in Defence of Marxism', presented his ideas in a paper entitled 'How Trotsky Foretold the Collapse of the Soviet Union'.

It was notable that Boris Slavin, a member of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federa-

tion, was present. He spoke in the conference. Clearly Trotskyism is a force to be watched!

The conference passed a significant resolution which set up a committee to continue the work started in the Institute of Economics.

It plans to ensure that more of Trotsky's writings, and other works by oppositionists, are published in Russian. It will also prepare future conferences, and a more substantial centre for the study of Trotsky and Trotskyism in Russia.

Frisco unions claim strike victory

TRADES unionists in San Francisco are claiming a victory over union-busting and job cuts at the Hearst newspaper chain's San Francisco Newspaper Agency, 'Chronicle' and 'Examiner'.

After an 11-day strike, management has withdrawn plans to sack 150 delivery drivers, members of the Teamsters' union, agreeing to union recognition for janitors at satellite plants.

The 2,600 printworkers, delivery drivers and reporters will

year rise over a contract lasting till 1998. Newspaper librarians who demanded parity with journalists will get 7 per cent.

During the strike union members produced their own 'free press', complete with top columnists and paid advertising, in both electronic and hard-copy form, with an estimated 100,000 circulation, beating the company's scab sheet.

Longshoremen at the docks refused to unload paper for the

who had walked out protesting racist anti-immigrant policies joined workers' picket lines. A teamster was killed trying to switch off the company's power supplies.

'The success of this strike will serve as a rallying point for unions across the country,' said Doug Cuthbertson, chairman of the Conference of Newspaper Unions. 'Some pundits have said that the union movement is on the wane in San Francisco. We

Socialists seized in Korea

KOREAN police are holding 36 trades unionists and socialists seized in raids last month and alleged to be supporters of the International Socialists of South Korea.

Some of those arrested, who include workers from the giant Hyundai industrial complex, are accused of 'intervening in labour disputes', 'inciting strikes' and organising 'solidarity campaigns'. Some are accused of having attended the 'Marxism '94' summer school of the

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Inside left

White eagle, white ensign

SERB planes attacked the Bosnian town of Bihac with napalm and cluster bombs last week. The attackers flew from bases in the Serb-controlled Krajina region of Croatia, which made things awkward for the French and British governments, hoping to broker a new Croat-Serb agreement.

Such bombing raids are awkward also for those who falsely equate 'all sides to the Bosnian conflict', or try to invert the issues by ignoring Bosnian suffering and alluding to Serb fears of oppression.

The Serbs of Krajina, with their fierce tradition and bitter memories of Croat fascism in World War II, may have kept their old rifles oiled. But we doubt whether Krajina peasants have kept jet aircraft in their barns, or stockpiled aviation fuel (so much for UN sanctions!). As for the cluster bombs, these possibly came from the stock supplied to the Yugoslav airforce by a British firm, Hunting Engineering of Bedford, in the 1980s.

The British government supplies all the arms it can to brutal dictatorships for repression, even lends them money to buy British; but when Bosnians plead for the means to defend themselves, Foreign Secretary Hurd and Defence Secretary Rifkind say no, it can't be allowed. Children can be blown to pieces with anti-personnel mines, but the British government won't allow even the export of mine detectors.

SOME Labour MPs and many Labour Party members sympathise with the people of Bosnia. But the anti-Bosnian alliance (which is really against all the workers of ex-Yugoslavia who oppose ethnic cleansing and chauvinist aggression) extends from both parties' front-benches to sections of the 'left' who follow the Stalinist 'Morning Star'.

'Labour blasts war move by US', screamed the 'Morning Star' on Saturday 12 November. Had the Clinton administration attacked Cuba, or stepped up threats to Iraq? Had Labour 'defence' spokesman David Clark suddenly abandoned his firm support of NATO's nuclear alliance to oppose US imperialism? No, to placate US opinion Clinton had decided to withdraw two US warships from the NATO fleet patrolling the Adriatic.

Is the 'Morning Star's' new slogan 'Yanks don't go home'? Labour's spokesman had 'condemned the US decision to stop enforcing the arms ban on the Bosnian government', said the paper's Mike Ambrose (at least he doesn't pretend it is keeping weapons from the Serbs!).

'Even Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd made a rare statement distancing the British government from the US decision,' he added. But Hurd's hostility to Bosnia has been clear all along.

'The Adriatic sea embargo on arms to Bosnia has stopped heavy weapons getting through, although arms merchants have been getting in smaller arms shipments through road and air links,' said the 'Star'. 'The Royal Navy claims that there has been 100 per cent success in the naval blockade.' Just like it blockaded Republican Spain during the 1930s civil war.

Two years ago a Serb comrade told of soldiers in the former Yugoslav army removing the red star from their caps, replacing it with the Serb nationalist white eagle. Maybe the 'Morning Star' should remove the red star from its front-page, and display the white ensign. 'Rule Britannia', comrades?

The future of — and the responsibility of the workers

Paper to the Tuzla conference by the Workers International

THE Workers International unconditionally supports Bosnia-Herzegovina in the struggle it is waging against the genocidal attempts of the Serbian regime to implement its fascist-type policy of 'ethnic cleansing' and carve-up of the country.

Fifty years after the Holocaust, this small country is in the front line against the renewed threat of fascism in Europe. Through this conference we send our warmest greetings to all those fighting for democratic rights and a multicultural mutual life, and we remember all those who have been killed fighting for such ideals.

We are an organisation to unite the oppressed and exploited throughout the world against all injustices. Above all, it is essential to develop and strengthen the international solidarity of the workers. By workers we mean those who work for wages, whether in industry or in hospitals, schools and other services. Those who are in struggle in any country should not be left to fight alone.

It was from this standpoint that we were proud to be one of the founding organisations of Workers Aid to Bosnia. It was a Serbian member of the Workers International who proposed the organisation of the Workers Aid convoys to Tuzla — the centre of workers' resistance in Bosnia. Since its foundation in June 1993, Workers Aid has set out to break the blockade of Bosnia. Its convoys have two purposes: first, to take humanitarian aid; second, to campaign throughout Europe in workplaces and workers' communities for support and solidarity with the struggle of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It is this second purpose that the Workers International has fought for at the centre of the campaign; aid alone is not enough. The con-

An international conference, 'Is Europe Possible without Multiculture?', was held in Tuzla, north-east Bosnia, on 3-5 November. The conference, organised by the Verona Forum, the Tuzla Citizens' Forum and Circle 99, was a platform for the multicultural forces of Tuzla to be heard, in their fight against the ethnic-partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dot Gibson represented the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International at the conference. Others participating represented public, cultural and political organisations from 15 countries of Europe and America. On the last day of the conference there was a confrontation between

voys carry aid collected and donated by workers, not capitalists. This in itself is an act of international solidarity. We must, together, develop this workers' independence and self-organisation.

THERE has been heartening support from countless thousands of workers and ordinary people — especially the young — who responded to Workers Aid's call to build internationalism. This response was particularly forthcoming when they were told of the outstanding history of solidarity of the Tuzla miners and how they contributed a day's pay every month for the British miners during the strike of 1984-85, and how they always sent practical assistance to mining disasters anywhere in the world.

Workers Aid has never set out to criticise, from outside, the deci-

the Muslim nationalists and the Tuzla-based Social Democrats, whose resolution (printed below) is to be widely circulated. With this call, the Social Democrats have publicly, and internationally, launched their fight against the supporters of Bosnia's President Alija Izetbegovic and those within the country who consider that the leaders of the nationalist parties are the only representatives of the three peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Workers International welcomes the Social Democrats' initiative, but did not sign it because of important points of disagreement (see editorial — page 2). The conference was, however, a step forward in clarifying the necessity of building workers'

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sions taken within Bosnia-Herzegovina, but to actively build support in the countries where it is working. Indeed the concept of workers' internationalism has been a central discussion within the Workers Aid for Bosnia committees in Europe and within the teams of drivers and helpers who have brought the convoys to Tuzla.

In that sense the modest international initiative of Workers Aid for Bosnia has become part of the much-needed discussion and common fight of workers in eastern and western Europe.

Workers internationally, including the Bosnian workers, have to find a way of acting in their own name and with their own strength. Only the working class and young people of all nationalities, with no religious distinction, can open the way for a new life in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the whole of the former

Yugoslavia. The great danger is that the heroic struggle of the workers of Bosnia will remain isolated. It is here that the international working class has the greatest responsibility: it must act to break the blockade of Bosnia and prevent the defeat of the Bosnian people at the hands of the imperialist powers and their puppet, the Serbian regime.

That is why, when in 1993 the first Workers Aid convoy reached the Croatian capital Zagreb, it took up the demand emanating from Tuzla for the opening of the northern [corridor] route. The mainly young convoy team blockaded the United Nations Protection Force headquarters to make public this demand. It was then that opposition was found not only from Serbian and Croatian nationalists and the UN, but also from forces within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself.

There were also found at that time, among some of the besieged people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, hopes that the world's 'Great Powers' would come to their rescue. But these so-called Great Powers have either organised deliberately for the destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or stood cynically aside and allowed Milosevic and his Serbian regime to carry out their murderous activities.

DESPITE daily press releases giving details of the systematic rape of Muslim women, often carried out by neighbour against neighbour at gunpoint, the barbaric massacres of whole villages, and the failure to supply food and medicine to the besieged people, this information remained unpublished for months.

One thing has surely been established beyond dispute. The dead and the maimed, the raped women, the disturbed and orphaned children, the destroyed homes, and the shattered cultural heritage are a grim warning that the United Nations is not operating in ex-Yugo-



Workers Aid blockaded the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb to demand the opening of the northern route

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slavia to put a stop to this destruction. On the contrary, the 'Great Powers' use the United Nations as their central instrument to impose their bloody plans on the Bosnian people.

■ At the beginning of the war the leaders of the Great Powers only admitted knowing about the concentration camps when journalists' reports were published — six months after the UN had discovered these camps.

■ After two-and-a-half years of genocide they pulled out of Gorazde, leaving thousands of starving, defenceless people to face the Serb Chetnik army.

■ Despite agreements and repeated promises by the United Na-

tions, Tuzla airport still remains closed to humanitarian aid.

■ On 4 October [the UN's] Lt-General Michael Rose had 'cordial' talks with Serbian leaders in Pale — on 7 October UN troops opened fire on Bosnian forces near Trnovo.

The leaders of the 'democratic' capitalist countries of Europe will not let human and democratic rights stand in their way. They hover like vultures over the break-up of the old order in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, looking for the best pickings — how best to exploit the situation to make the most profit. That is their 'new world order', their 'market forces'.

The UN-sponsored Vance-Owen-Stoltenburg plan was not new. In the two years before the war, during their regular discussions, Croatia's President Tudjman and Milosevic were in secret talks with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic about the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 'peace' talks were a continuation of this conspiracy. Vance-Owen-Stoltenburg had a clear mandate to ensure the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, suppressing the democratic, multicultural forces, and supporting the right-wing nationalists who shared the aims of Vance-Owen.

But they could not have begun to carry out these plans, and certainly cannot complete them, without the support of the official leaderships in the workers' organisations. In practice these political and trade union bureaucracies have colluded with the European imperialists in their efforts to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Some of these leaders openly support the Greater Serbian nationalists. Retaining the worst features of the Stalinist bureaucracy, they make the incredible claim that

the Serbian state is in some way 'socialist' and the Milosevic regime somehow represents the interests of the workers. But such people as Lord Owen, formerly foreign secretary in a British Labour government, have been key figures in the imperialist conspiracy against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Other leaders of the working-class movement adopt a 'neutral' position on the question of the defence of Bosnia. They condemn 'all the nationalities' or the 'warring factions'. On this basis they have refused to back Workers Aid and refused to lead a campaign for the right of the Bosnian people to arm themselves against their aggressors.

In failing to distinguish between the attacker and the attacked, the oppressor and the oppressed, such people in effect take the side of the

**'We unconditionally
support the right of
Bosnia-Herzegovina
to self-determination'**

Serbian regime. Such leaders in the workers' movement have consistently refused to fight for the right of the Bosnian peoples to arm themselves against their aggressors. Yet they know that the Greater Serbian nationalists seized most of the weapons and other equipment of the former Yugoslav army at the beginning of the war. As the world knows, the sanctions against Serbia have hit the workers and ordinary people of that country



Workers Aid has sought to break the blockade of the workers of Bosnia

but have not prevented the regime from acquiring a regular supply of arms to pursue its foul policies.

If the forces of reaction within Bosnia-Herzegovina have gained any ground, then such leaders are responsible for this — they have prevented the workers of Europe and the rest of the world from using their strength to break the isolation of the workers and multicultural people of Bosnia-Herzegovina from their brothers and sisters in the rest of the world.

The bitter truth is that, unless this isolation is broken, the forces of reaction within Bosnia-Herzegovina — those who wish to establish a mini-fundamentalist state or to collaborate with the Serbian aggressors and the UN to carve up the country — will surely impose their will on the workers and multicultural people.

AFTER years of oppression carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the name of 'socialism', it is understandable that many people in the ex-USSR and eastern Europe have illusions in the capitalist market economy, as well as illusions in the trade union and social democratic parliamentary leaderships. What is the truth?

The UN itself has issued a series of figures which in their own way

provide a grim answer to this question. The statistics, produced as part of the preparation for a World Summit for Social Development to be held in March 1995, reveal that of the world's 5.6 billion people, one in five lives in poverty. One in five lacks access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. Of the planet's labour force of nearly 3 billion people, there are 120 million people actively looking for work — but without result or hope.

Although poverty is concentrated in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, it is growing rapidly in North America and western Europe, where one in six is currently below the poverty line.

London, still in some respects the world's leading financial centre, has 400,000 registered homeless. There are 10,000 with no home in Paris, out of a total of 500,000 homeless in France as a whole. Nearly a quarter of a million New Yorkers have stayed in shelters over the last five years. This is more than 3 per cent of the city's population, and includes more than one in 12 of its black children. Women represent 70 per cent of the poverty-stricken

The gains won by the workers during the last half-century — welfare and other benefits — are being taken from them by force. ● TURN TO PAGE 6

Condemnation of ethnic division

Final statement of the Tuzla conference

WE CAME to Tuzla with the intention of supporting the democratic forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which in Tuzla have shown that it is possible, even under war conditions, to preserve the spirit of tolerance and co-habitation [between peoples].

Condemning the aggression against the sovereign and internationally recognised Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ethnic cleansing and other forms of genocide to which its peoples are being subjected and the attempts to create a state based on one ethnic group on its territory, the participants of the conference agree upon the following:

1. That the establishment of a permanent and just peace must be a priority task for all those who care about the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their future.

2. We affirm our support for the preservation of an undivided, independent and internationally recognised Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its borders, and resolutely reject any recognition of the results of aggression.

3. We demand that the International War Crimes Tribunal identify as soon as possible the individuals who committed, ordered and encouraged war crimes, and sentence them in accordance with the standards of international law.

4. We demand that all displaced people and refugees be permitted, unconditionally, to return to their homes.

5. It is particularly important to extend material and other forms of assistance to the civic-oriented media, which play an indispensable role in the fight against hatred and intolerance.

6. It is necessary to end the isolation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. An important step in this direction

would be support for the projects aimed at lifting the telecommunications blockade on Tuzla.

7. We call on the United Nations Protection Force to act decisively in the future against those who prevent the passage of humanitarian convoys, to make possible the supply of aid along the northern corridor [a vital route from the Croatian border], and finally to open Tuzla airport.

8. We particularly warn against the destructive nature of any policy which tolerates the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines, or which considers the leaders of the national parties as the only representatives of the three peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Such a policy is a great injustice to all those Croats, Serbs and Boznjaks-Muslims who consider themselves to be primarily citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and who do not wish to be forced into national corrals.

As long as the national parties

consider themselves to be the exclusive representatives of the interests of their respective national groups there will be no chance of establishing a stable peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The consequences of such policies can be seen in the way the Washington treaty has so far been implemented: in particular, in the way in which the *de facto* strengthening of the statehood of the so-called [Serbian] Herceg-Bosna has been tolerated, thereby endangering the future prospects of the federation between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those who started the war cannot build peace.

9. Therefore we consider it necessary to extend help — moral, material and political — to those political parties and civic initiatives, for example Tuzla's, which have shown that it is possible, even under conditions of war and aggression, to preserve multiculturalism and national tolerance.

If we wish to help preserve and

spread the spirit of tolerance and to create the prerequisites for constructing a civic democratic society, then we must help all those forces supporting the civic option. These forces must be encouraged in order to avoid mutual misunderstandings and their efforts concentrated in the fight for democracy and tolerance, particularly in the legal field and in the promotion of the spirit of civic society.

10. Democratic, multicultural and anti-fascist Europe is faced with a choice: either help Tuzla to become a model for all the other communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose citizens have so far been prevented from expressing their innate aspirations towards a multicultural and tolerant society; or contribute, through passivity, to the irrevocable destruction of any hope for the reconstruction of a multicultural and tolerant Bosnia.

This would mean the defeat of the fundamental values of modern Europe.

Bosnia's future

FROM PAGE 5

Encouraged by the western European 'democracies', many of the racists and fascists are on the offensive, not least against the many people from Bosnia-Herzegovina who have been forced to flee their country.

This is the true face of capitalism, the system that the official leaders of the workers' movement completely support. To be real supporters of the workers of Bosnia-Herzegovina we must be fighters against the governments and exploiters in our own countries and remove the traitors from the workers' movement!

Thanks in large measure to the heroic resistance of the people of Bosnia, as well as to the contradictions of the war reflected in Serbia itself, the Great Powers now realise that they cannot impose their authority through the outright victory of Greater Serbian nationalism. They therefore aim to achieve control of Bosnia-Herzegovina through their supporter, Bosnia's President Alija Izetbegovic. That is the meaning of the 'Washington Agreement'.

During the war it has been necessary for the working class and its supporters to build unity against the aggressors and therefore give support to the Bosnia-Herzegovina government. But Izetbegovic's ruling party is a compromising party that is increasingly unable to tolerate any opposition to its plans to reach a deal with the Serbian regime and the imperialist powers through the Washington Plan.

WE unconditionally support the right of Bosnia-Herzegovina to self-determination. In the past this small country, at a crossroads in Europe, has been denied its inalienable right to independence. Neighbouring powers always sought to carve it up, but they could never get so close to their objective as today.

It needed adventurers and mercenaries such as Karadzic, Boban, Mladic and Arkan to try and prove — with tons and tons of shells and countless supplies of weapons — that Bosnia's people, with their 30 per cent of mixed marriages, could not live together as one!

There are those who tell us that

it is the demand for self-determination that is breaking up the 'socialist' federation of Yugoslavia. This is a lie. The step forward towards socialism that was made in the creation of the federation of Yugoslavia on the basis of common ownership and equality was virtually destroyed by the corrupt bureaucracy, and taken out of the hands of those who fought for it.

The reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR and eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, maintained its 'Bonapartist' rule by bloody suppression of the working class and national minorities. It is clear from the repression of the Albanians in Kosovo that the Yugoslav National Army was an army of occupation.

The break-up of the Stalinist bureaucracy inevitably meant the break-up of the Yugoslav federation and the Yugoslav National Army. The naked aggression of Greater Serbian nationalism now tramples over all the other nationalities. Today it is Bosnia-Herzegovina, tomorrow it could be Kosovo.

And behind the smokescreen of Serbian aggression, the nationalist Tudjman aims to extend Croatian territory in line with his prior agreement with Milosevic and Karadzic.

The right of self-determination, national culture, and national heritage are very different from nationalist exclusiveness and domination. This latter nationalism, exemplified in the Serbian regime, stands opposed to workers' internationalism and subordinates the interests of ordinary people to the requirements of capitalism and its new world order. This danger has been present from the outset.

Within the necessity to build unity within Bosnia-Herzegovina against Greater Serbian aggression and to reach out to workers and anti-nationalists in the rest of ex-Yugoslavia, it was always necessary to establish the independence of the workers and their supporters in the multicultural community. That is why we stand side by side with all those who are against the privatisation of those enterprises that are commonly owned in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Before the outbreak of the war,

thousands of workers, led by the Tuzla miners, marched on the Bosnian capital Sarajevo demanding democratic rights and an end to nationalism. But their action remained at the level of protest — they had no independent party.

Years of rule by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR and eastern Europe, the murder, imprisonment and exile of opposition forces, enabling the nationalist social-democratic leaderships to remain at the head of the workers' movement and even in government in western European countries, had left the working-class opposition in Bosnia-Herzegovina isolated from the workers in the rest of the world.

Izetbegovic has been 'looking over his shoulder' at these workers



Greater Serbian aggression tramples over Bosnian workers

and their supporters amongst the fighters for democratic rights and a multicultural country. It is clear that he is far more ready to capitulate to the Washington Agreement than to see the workers take the lead in the fight for the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite the terror and barbarism inflicted on the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Izetbegovic government sat down at the 'peace' talks with the aggressors, and continued to do so even after every 'agreement' for a ceasefire had been broken. Vance-Owen-Stoltenburg treated Izetbegovic with contempt, but they could be sure that he would want their support against the workers, and especially against the free territory of Tuzla in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It is not an accident that UNPROFOR never attempted to open the northern route into the Tuzla region, and it is well known that Izetbegovic did not demand this. Neither did he carry out a concerted campaign for the opening of Tuzla airport.

When Izetbegovic tried to prove to his mentors his complete reliability by proposing a law for

the privatisation of the country's mines and industry, the opposition in Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially the trades unions, prevented him from doing so.

On numerous occasions, during the 'peace' negotiations, Izetbegovic agreed to the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, only to find that the opposition was too great and threatened to overthrow his tenuous leadership. The Washington Agreement is the latest attempt to effect such a carve-up of the country.

To impose the cantonisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina through the Washington Agreement, the free press, radio and television must be silenced, the multicultural communities must be broken up, and the free territory must remain isolated. That is the meaning of the violation of democratic rights and the organised disruption at the Constitutional Assembly of the Tuzla-Drina canton. We fully support and will participate in the campaign to enable the free media to operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rest of ex-Yugoslavia.

To the fore in organising the pro-nationalist and fundamentalist forces are the ex-Stalinists of the old regime. It was they who blocked the workers' resistance before the war when the miners planned a further mass march to Sarajevo. Added to that is the attempt by the Muslim fundamentalist leaders of Iran and other countries to blackmail the people of Bosnia with help to their resistance to Greater Serbian nationalism.

But Iran and other Islamic republics in fact are just another form of capitalist state in which 'the market' presides, and the exploited workers and ordinary people are without even the most basic democratic rights.

As in Europe, the crisis rages in Iran. So far the regime has received over \$30 billion, and has not paid back even the first instalment. Inflation is around 60 per cent and the prices of basic foodstuffs like rice, meat and eggs have trebled in the last two years. Workers are forced to get second jobs in order to survive, while the unemployed are forced to fend for themselves, with no social benefits.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina started on 6 April 1992. On 5 April the workers invaded the powerless parliament, chased everybody out and proclaimed a committee for the protection of the general public. But immediately, the next day, amidst the noise of the bombings and the blazing buildings, this initiative was subdued.

But it was not lost. The heroic resistance and organisation of survival shows that Bosnia will never be the same, but in the midst of the

chaos and barbarity something new can and must be built.

In the same way that we have respected the right of the workers of Bosnia-Herzegovina to make their own decisions in the war, we now recognise that, because of their virtual isolation, they may be forced to accept partition in the form of the Washington Agreement. But there can be no illusions that this 'agreement' is a solution or that it will be respected by those who are determined to destroy the multicultural free territory.

This makes it even more necessary for us to build international connections with workers throughout the world. We fully support the decision taken by Workers Aid and the Tuzla trade union committee for a delegation from Tuzla to visit Britain, France and Spain.

We have raised here many questions with which other participants at this conference may not agree. But it is only by discussing the differences amongst us — as well as the things on which we have agreement — that we can strengthen the movement in defence of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and particularly the workers and their allies who fight for a multicultural country.

The next step is to discuss a programme for the future rebuilding of Bosnia-Herzegovina in common with the struggle of workers internationally. This requires an internationalist party that fights for socialism — not that gross perversion of socialism that went under the name of Stalinism, but a society in which exploitation, national oppression, war, hunger and poverty will be things of the past. As a first step we propose a conference of workers of all ex-Yugoslavia.

Everything is at stake in Bosnia. In every sense it is the key to the international situation. Are the forces of fascism going to make a first step forward against the working class of Bosnia and therefore the workers of the world? Or can the working class turn the tide and take a step forward in the reconstruction of the working class and its internationalism? This is the most fundamental question of all.

THROUGH our collaboration in the Bosnia-Herzegovina international solidarity campaign, the Workers International (centred in Britain) has formed a liaison committee with the Workers International League (centred in Brazil). Both of our organisations are committed to the reconstruction of workers' internationalism and the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the opposition established in 1938 by Leon Trotsky in the fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

PERSONAL COLUMN

Men of a special breed

THERE were miners at work in these islands some 4,500 years ago.

At Grime's Graves in Norfolk, they dug laboriously with stone axes through 20 feet of chalk to find the flint seams. You can still see their fingerprints on the 'picks' they used, made from red-deer antlers.

And at the Harrow Hill flint-mines near Worthing in Sussex you can see the black soot-marks from their small open lamps over gallery entrances.

Like their successors in Britain's tin-mines and lead-mines and coal-mines, these workers dared to go where no one else would venture — down into the darkness, to crouch or lie prone as they hewed at the seam, perpetually risking injury or entombment.

Coal-mining and the coal trade boomed with the industrial revolution: in the first 40 years of the 19th century the

quantity of coal raised trebled.

No area boomed so dramatically as Durham, whose easy access to the sea along three navigable rivers made it Britain's main exporting coalfield. Only 30 years ago, a quarter of Durham's adult male population were employed in the pits.

Now there are none. This is clearly the right time for Dave Temple, who worked for 19 years at Murton colliery, to start telling the story of the Durham coalfield and its colliers, so that future generations shall never forget that '[i]t was the victim of a violent and vengeful attack and has been killed before its time'.

Temple's 'The Collieries of Durham', vol. 1 (Newcastle upon Tyne, Trade Union Printing Services Ltd, £9.90) is an outstanding piece of writing by an ex-miner who, like many others, finds himself 'still in a state of mourning for a once great industry that did so much to fashion the nature and way of life of its people'.

MINERS were, and are, men of a special breed. I first heard, from their own lips, about their proud traditions of solidarity and struggle when I visited South Wales and Fife in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Their solidarity sprang from

the fact that, underground, their lives were in each other's hands. In those days when pit-props were made of wood, the slightest creaking might herald a roof fall, the slightest whiff of smoke a deadly fire. 'Blood on the coal' wasn't a piece of high-sounding rhetoric: it was literally true.

And the industry that sucked out these men's sweat and blood tossed generation after generation of them on to the scrap-heap when they had nothing left to give. Many an evening in the Rhondda valley and Lumphinans I would see men under sentence of death from silicosis or pneumoconiosis standing at their front gates, coughing desperately for minutes on end.

Temple skilfully combines the human side of the story with the conquest by determined engineers of formidable geological and watery obstacles ('water feeders' that suddenly started to pour thousands of gallons a minute into the shaft). Both aspects are fascinating and often moving.

The human side is all too often darkly tragic, but again and again the tragedy is shot through with courage and heroism. Temple has some vivid stories to tell, and he tells them well.

Some of these stories have been passed down in the oral

tradition, as warnings to young miners of the dangers that might be lying in wait for them. Here is one.

In 1925 three miners, George Wilson, Vince Elwick, and Frank McNally were working underground when the roof started to 'weight on'. They were in imminent danger of being crushed. McNally's hand was trapped between a roof strap and a tub.

Frantically, they tried to get his hand free, but in the end McNally's workmates had to chop off his fingers with a hammer and chisel. Just seconds before the roof caved in, they managed to drag him to safety.

It was on men of this calibre that Thatcher spat her venom ten years ago. 'The enemy within', she called them.

The working class will never forget this, and Dave Temple's book will help us not only to remember, but also to settle accounts in the fullness of time.

THIS book has clearly been planned and produced with exceptional care, and there are some aspects that call for special praise.

Temple's chapters on individual pits — Elemore, Eppleton, Hawthorn, Murton, Sacriston (originally Charlaw) and Witton, and Wearmouth — give



Thomas Ramsay lived to see a new union in the pits

the story of each from sinking to closure; and each of these chapters, it has to be said, is in itself a mine of information.

There is a helpful — indeed, for outsiders, an essential — chapter explaining the technical terms used in the Durham coalfield.

No praise is too high for the book's rich array of illustrations, from Stan Gamester's starkly beautiful cover photograph of Murton colliery, through the numerous prints, photographs, and diagrams that adorn almost every page. I was delighted to see two pictures featuring colliery bands, which I hope are still functioning.

The top-hatted figure shown

above is Thomas Ramsay, one of the 'sacrificed' (i.e. sacked and blacklisted) men from the 1844 strike, when 40,000 miners and their families were evicted from their homes.

Ramsay kept the spirit of trade unionism alive by walking from village to village, 'holding meetings of any who dared to listen'.

This same steadfast spirit has inspired Dave Temple's enthralling book.

Peter Fryer

Scottish socialist writer Lewis Grassie Gibbon (1901-35), who 'brought history to life in the struggles, ideas and passions of working people', is remembered

Granite beneath the clouds

IN 1934, the Scottish writer Lewis Grassie Gibbon completed 'Grey Granite', the third in a trilogy of novels tracing the life of Chris Tavendale and her family from Highland crofting ('Sunset Song'), and a small town just after World War I ('Cloud Howe'), to a shipbuilding city during the Great Depression ('Grey Granite').

Tragically, Gibbon — whose real name was Leslie Mitchell — died the following year, aged only 34. The trilogy was published in 1946 as 'A Scots Quair'. Born on an Aberdeenshire croft himself ('I think of myself as of peasant stock', he remarked), Gibbon knew the countryside as a place of hard lives and toil, not just scenery. His novels were remarkable, for the bold way they brought history to life in the struggles, ideas and passions of working people, and the skill with which he turned spoken Scots into a modern literary language; a rare unity of form and content.

Also in 1934, 'Scottish Scene' — or the Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn' (Hutchinson), teamed Gibbon with the poet Hugh MacDiarmid, though each wrote their own sections, and a

'Curtain raiser' warned: 'The standpoint of one . . . is not necessarily that of the other.'

Indeed they were opposites. MacDiarmid, a Scottish nationalist who joined the British Communist Party when Soviet tanks were crushing the Hungarian workers, devoted an admiring chapter in 'Scottish Scene' to Major C.H. Douglas, whose reactionary 'social-credit' ideas were ridiculed by Gibbon.

Gibbon's communism was older, deeper, more critical. Writing on Aberdeen ('Union Street has as much warmth in its face as a dowager duchess asked to contribute to the Red International Relief'), he remembers:

'[T]he founding of the Aberdeen Soviet when the news of the Bolshevik Revolution came through from Russia; and how I and a cub reporter from another paper attended the foundation meeting; and were elected to the Soviet council, forgetting we were pressmen . . .'

On religion, in deriding elderly gentlemen with white whiskers and rosy cheeks who, at church gatherings debating war, upheld 'the Sword of Righteousness', Gibbon points out

they are out of touch with modern warfare. 'Why not the saw-toothed Bayonet of Salvation? Why not the Gas of God?' he asks.

Writing with feeling on the slum tenements of Glasgow, and those condemned to live in them, Gibbon takes us for a stroll on Glasgow Green to hear the various speakers, the socialist and other 'doctors' offering their cures.

Contrasting the slum conditions with the endless talk of 'Scottish culture' he encounters in middle-class literary circles, Gibbon confesses humorously to being tempted himself by nationalist dreams, such as restoring the stone of Scone, or installing saffron-kilted border guards. 'But I cannot play with those fantasies when I think of the hundred and forty thousand in Glasgow. They are something that still the parlour chatter,' he says.

Gibbon gives a biting portrait of Labour leader James Ramsay MacDonald and his gradualist 'evolutionary socialism', saying: '[T]hat philosophy of socialism which Mr MacDonald was wont to exfoliate in the days before, glancing down-

wards and backwards, he caught sight of the seemly shape his calves occupied inside the silk stockings of court dress.'

And on MacDonald's 1924 Labour government, Gibbon says:

'Dazed Conservatives realised that here was the most Conservative government since Lord Salisbury's; obstreperous Mesopotamians were bombed with great thoroughness by order of the Under-Secretary for Air, the personal friend of the premier, the pacifistic Mr Leach.'

Writing to friends in July 1929, Gibbon remarked:

'What do you think of those snivelling Labourists? Safety first! Keep out M. Trotsky — a dangerous revolutionist, and whatever would the "Morning Post" say? Keep down the school-leaving age — the dear industrialists will still require cheap labour. Persecute the unemployed like criminals — good for them . . . Swine!'

William K. Malcolm, in 'A Blasphemer and Reformer' (Aberdeen University Press, 1984), says Gibbon's philosophy had much in common with di-

alectical materialism. Certainly in 'A Scots Quair' Gibbon puts thoughts in Chris Tavendale's mind which suggest the author had read Engels.

Hugh MacDiarmid, interviewed in the 1960s, thought Gibbon had been expelled from the Communist Party as a 'Trotskyist'. Betty Reid, according to Malcolm, had a firm impression that Gibbon had been a CP member 'and that there were some problems which I have now forgotten which caused him to leave the Party'.

In 'Stained Radiance', a character called Storman resigns from the party, saying: 'In Russia, a Communist state, I saw the same purposeless disorder as rules in capitalist England: I saw the same aimless enslavement to an archaic economic machine; I saw a ruling class — the Communist Party — in power.'

The final part of 'A Scots Quair' leaves much to argue about. 'Och, this Communism stuff's not canny . . .', says Ma Cleghorn, 'it's just a religion though the Reds say it's not.'

And the character Ewan Tavendale gives this impression after visiting a Communist

Party member's home: 'Neither friends nor scruples nor honour nor hope for the folk who took the workers' road.'

Though contemptuous of Ewan's human approach to fellow-workers, Communist Party members offer their support in his fight against victimisation and police brutality. '[T]he Communists would exploit the case to the full — for their own ends first, not for Ewan's,' says Gibbon.

Driven by his experiences of capitalist violence and Labour betrayal, Ewan takes the 'workers' road' with the Communist Party. His mother Chris, who has already rejected religion, tells him: 'Yours is just another dark cloud to me . . .' She goes back to her roots in the country.

In 1935, Gibbon was interested in forming a group of revolutionary writers, but in a letter to 'Left Review' he severely criticised the official 'line' with which the Stalinists were attempting to appeal to writers. 'Because I'm a revolutionist I see no reason for gainsaying my own critical judgement,' Gibbon told them.

Charlie Pottins

A preserver of the libertarian ideas of Marxism

BY JAMES D. YOUNG

THE novelist James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassie Gibbon) was a giant of Scottish and world literature. His life and politics remain clouded in some obscurity, but he was undoubtedly an independent socialist and a Marxist.

In his book 'Lewis Grassie Gibbon' (Edinburgh, 1985), in the Scottish Writers Series, Ian Campbell asserts that Gibbon was 'a Marxist of a closely defined nature', and that 'Gibbon the Marxist and Gibbon the Diffusionist found themselves in hearty accord'.

University-manufactured literary 'criticism' in Britain is unimpressive, and Ian Campbell has no more respect for theory than for basic facts about Gibbon's life. By describing Gibbon's father as 'a farmer', instead of a crofter, he conceals the awful poverty in which the young Mitchell was raised in the Mearns of northern Scotland.

Before I retired from Stirling university in 1991 as a result of ill-health, I spent 20 years trying to convince the students in my Scottish history classes that Gibbon's 'A Scots Quair' was a better guide to Scottish history than any academic history book written before World War II.

A great deal of fresh information about the politics of Mitchell/Gibbon has been unearthed by John Manson, a Scottish socialist who belongs to my generation. A gifted poet and translator, whose work has been very neglected and ignored in 'the Land of Cakes and Kailyard', the now-retired Manson's working life was divided between working as a crofter and then as a primary teacher. Gibbon was, according to Man-

son, the 1920s, as well as being aware of Guy Aldred, the Glasgow-based English anarchist.

Although there is no evidence that Gibbon ever belonged to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid asserted that he had been 'expelled as a Trotskyist'. At a time when MacDiarmid was attracted by the right-wing 'social-credit' theories of Major C.H. Douglas, whereas Guy Aldred was publishing sympathetic articles on Trotsky, between 1929 and his death in 1935, Gibbon rubbished fascism and, in a nation where Stalinist influence was strong, praised Trotsky as a revolutionary.

In 1933 Gibbon met James Maxton of the Independent Labour Party and attended its annual conference; a number of Trotskyists were working inside this party. In his novels Gibbon expressed his sympathy with Spartacus, the leader of the slave revolt against the Roman Empire. In an important contribution to 'Left Review', Gibbon opposed the Stalinists' line on 'proletarian' versus 'degenerate bourgeois' art, a line based on their desire, in Max Eastman's phrase, to put 'artists in uniforms'.

Contributing articles to the Scottish nationalist magazine 'Free Man' in 1934, Gibbon denounced the Italian fascists' concentration camps, and 'denigration of Italian culture'. He concluded: 'I am a Scotsman, an artist, an in an integral part of my being, an anarchist. My art is implicit anarchy.'

Not only did Gibbon have a better intuitive understanding of Scottish history than the historians at that time, but he implicitly defended Marxism against its Stalinist enemies. In the introduction to his

'Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History', Terry Brotherstone singled out Gibbon's comment in 'A Scots Quair' that the 17th-century Covenanters were 'the advance guard of the common folk of those days, their Covenant just formulae they hid their social rebellion in'.

Though we do not know what Gibbon was reading, or had read, about the Covenanters, his language, insights and social ethics owed nothing to Stalinism. Gibbon's particular Marxist language is reminiscent of that employed by Ernest Belfort Bax in his studies on the Reformation in Europe.

John Manson is trying to find out about the works read by Gibbon which form the background to his own works. It should be stressed that the Scottish labour movement in places such as Glasgow and Aberdeen was responsible for distributing the older Marxist historical literature as Gibbon was growing up.

Although Gibbon was a passionate defender of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, he helped keep alive the basic idea of the almost ancient 'Martyrdom of Man' (as in Winwood Reade's book of that title). During the decades, from the mid-1920s on, of the martyrdom of labour in the brutal forced industrialisation in Russia, which masqueraded as 'socialism', Marxism was distorted and turned on its head. The libertarian ideas of Marxism survived, though, in 'A Scots Quair', because of the intuitive genius of an outstanding novelist.

When Gibbon uses 'A Scots Quair' to describe the Communist Party leaders in the 1930s as 'socialists' who view working



British workers greet a Soviet ship in 1920: Gibbon was a passionate defender of the Bolshevik revolution

Marxist idea. It was on a par with US Stalinist Joseph Freeman's comment that 'The unusual development of individuals has raised a Stalin, a Dzerzhinsky, Chicherin or Bukharin to that leadership which every social group requires whenever such men show a greater capacity than the average for understanding and manipulating the mechanics of history' ('An American Testament', New York, 1938).

'History does nothing . . .'. Gibbon was a critical, independently-minded socialist internationalist who grasped intuitively that to which Stalinism was fundamentally hostile, the classic Marxist idea that the collapse of Stalinism enables us to recover: 'The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class themselves.'

After World War II the Stalinists in Scotland, Russia and

revolutionaries are to reclaim him, there must be an awareness of the extent to which Stalinist ideas penetrated the anti-Stalinist left, thereby obscuring the Marxist view of history implicitly defended by Gibbon.

Gibbon represents an idea whose time has come; he was not a dry-as-dust politico. A better idea of the specific socialist culture from which he came should help us towards a better

Gaza: being pushed towards civil war

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

THE killing of 12 Palestinians and the wounding of hundreds more by Palestinian police in Gaza city on 18 November could put an end to popular support for Yasser Arafat and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Whether or not they are ready for it, people are being pushed towards civil war.

'Oh Arafat, remember Sadat; Arafat, you are next!' was the chant from the victims' families and friends as they carried the bodies from the hospital for burial. Egyptian president Anwar al Sadat was assassinated in 1981. Like Arafat, he was a Nobel peace prize winner.

Police with riot shields and batons had gone to Gaza's Palestine mosque as noon prayers were ending on Friday, to prevent a public meeting being held by Islamic groups in defiance of Arafat's orders.

The police seized loudspeakers from a truck outside. They claim they opened fire in 'self-defence' after youths threw stones and bottles. Others said the shooting had been unprovoked, or at any rate well over the top. People accused Arafat and his fledgling Palestinian National Authority (PNA) of being stooges of the Israeli state.

Chanting

The outrage at the mosque set in motion a new intifada, albeit with peculiarities introduced by the religious elements. As funerals turned into demonstrations, crowds of youth gathered outside government buildings and police stations, chanting slogans and throwing stones before the police drove them off. Two cinemas were set on fire, as well as an Israeli army checkpoint.

In Rafah, to the south, masked members of the Muslim Resistance Movement Hamas' armed wing, Qassam, led hundreds of youth to take over the city centre for six hours, smashing two cafes, a video

shop and the town cinema.

Palestinian discontent and disillusion with the outcome of the accord between Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin has been growing, as people realise that even the minimum aims of the national struggle remain unmet, and the PLO's authority is confined to doing what the Israeli Zionist state lets it.

The growth in support for movements like Hamas and Islamic Jihad is more of a symptom of unrest than a cause.

Not only is the PNA confined to the desperately poor Gaza Strip and an enclave around Jericho, but it leaves control over land, water, finance and borders in the hands of the Israeli state, while allowing the Israeli army to hand over some of its onerous policing duties to Arafat's forces. Palestinian police are not allowed to interfere with armed Zionist settlers, however.

What fertile and irrigated land there is around Gaza is largely in the hands of the settlers. Much of Gaza's population came as refugees from places like Jaffa and Ashkelon in 1948, to which they have only been able to return as day labourers for the Israelis. Not only are they denied the right to return, but having replaced thousands of Palestinian workers with contract labour from abroad, the Israeli government has used recent incidents to close the borders to them completely.

Many Palestinian workers were thrown out of Kuwait and other oil-rich states during the 1991 Gulf war, causing distress to families dependent on their earnings. As to Palestinians who have prospered abroad and wish to return and set up enterprises in the 'autonomous areas' of Gaza or the West Bank, the 'Jerusalem Times' reported on 13 May that they had to pay \$100,000 to Israeli authorities for permission to do so.

Israeli economist Esther Alexander says no substantial economic development can take place in the autonomous areas without a Palestinian currency, which Israel regards as a symbol of national independence and therefore adamantly opposes.

Writing in the Israeli daily 'Davar', Dr Alexander pointed out that Gaza and the West Bank



had a big reservoir of skilled but unemployed workers, and an equally great need for new schools, hospitals, sewers and other facilities.

A local currency issued by the governing authority through a central bank would serve as a medium of exchange of labour and goods inside the Palestinian economy and allow these projects to go forward.

Without it, any hard currency that the Palestinians managed to obtain from abroad will have to be exchanged for shekels or dinars and therefore 'all international aid which reaches Palestinians will eventually go to swell the currency reserves of either Israel or Jordan'.

The Israeli authorities are continuing to implant settlements in a ring around Jerusalem, while granting Jordan's King Hussein the status of protector of Muslim sites, separating this from Palestinian secular rights in east Jerusalem.

Hostage

They are also continuing to hold thousands of Palestinian prisoners, including Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the aged Hamas leader who has been ailing for years and is now paralysed from the neck down. His portrait appears on walls in Gaza. It was to demand the sheikh's release that Qassam kidnapped the Israeli soldier, Nathan Waxman, last month as a hostage.

Meanwhile, heeding Rabin's warning that he must 'choose between peace and Hamas', Arafat had ordered a crackdown on the Islamic movement, and some 230 of its members or suspected followers were arrested by Palestinian security police.

On 14 October, thousands of students from the Islamic University marched on Gaza central prison, and the following day some 10,000 Hamas supporters demonstrated outside. On 19 October, came the Tel Aviv bus explosion, at the height of the morning rush-hour, killing 22 people and injuring scores more. It was claimed by Hamas as a suicide mission.

Rabin closed the border and called for legislation permitting harsher interrogation of suspects, reportedly stating that 'if the security services had acted according to the guidelines of the Landau Commission report in interrogating Hamas people, they would not have found out the location of the kidnappers of Nachshon Waxman'.

(The 1987 Landau report on torture by the Israel General Security Service, Shabak, established secret guidelines permitting 'moderate physical pressure' in interrogations. Many people say this is just treated as a cynical euphemism, and that what judge Landau effectively did, regardless of his liberal intention, was to legalise torture.)

Justice minister David Liba'i stated that there was no need to change the guidelines, as there was already a specific exception to the Landau Commission guidelines enabling investigators to act 'efficiently' in cases such as a 'ticking time-bomb'.

On 13 November, the minister of justice denied reports that the Landau guidelines would be changed, but said that a decision had been taken 'to help strengthen the forces to fight the wave of terror of Hamas and Islamic Jihad'.

In Ashkelon prison, Ahmed Said, detained in September for

Still not free!

PALESTINIANS Muhammad Ahmad Asad and Rab'a Asad (left) are finally together after nine years of forced separation. Ahmad was released by the Israelis with one year to go of his ten-year sentence. But the couple, who were engaged when he was imprisoned, cannot return to their home village, Irtas.

Like 600 other prisoners from all parts of the West Bank, released by the Israelis under their peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Ahmad has been ordered to Jericho, which is under the Palestinian authority. Those who try to return to their homes are quickly rearrested.

The prisoners in Jericho, all of whom had to sign statements

supporting the peace agreement before they were released, receive 800 shekels a month (less than £100) from the Palestinian authority. Ahmad and Rab'a married in a deserted refugee camp near Jericho and are living in ruins.

Reporting the plight of the Jericho prisoners in 'Challenge' magazine, journalist Roni Ben Efrat quotes 19-year-old Imad Mahmud, who says Israeli policy is 'to humiliate the Palestinians, to show who is boss'.

A delegation from the Jericho prisoners went to see Arafat. They were kept waiting for hours, and then he gave them a quarter of an hour, but failed to deal with their problems. They have begun holding demonstrations.

the second time and accused of carrying messages for Hamas, had already suffered prolonged ill-treatment, being forced to stand for up to 18 to 20 hours a day, kept hooded, beaten, and deprived of sleep, when his interrogators told him they had 'removed their gloves' now. They told him orders had been given to interrogate without limits, and that he would be paralysed and unable to have children before they had finished.

Released

In Gaza, where no less than five Palestinian security branches have been set up, totalling 10,500 members, it is not only Hamas or Islamic Jihad supporters who have felt the heavy hand of the PNA on their shoulders. Yahya Abeid, released from the Israelis' Ansar prison camp last year after serving a five-year sentence, is a leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) who was rounded up last month.

'At three in the morning, a Palestinian security services officer asked me to come with him for ten minutes,' Abeid told 'Challenge' magazine (November-December issue, Jerusalem).

'When I asked him if he was arresting me, he dragged me to his car... I saw no arrest warrant, nor was I brought in front of a judge. I was taken to the central Gaza prison and put in the same cell as when the Israelis arrested us.'

Unlike Hamas, the DFLP has been historically part of the PLO, but does not recognise the agreement with Israel signed by Arafat. The round-up of front

members last month followed the ambush of an Israeli military patrol by the front's military wing, the Red Star brigade.

Interrogated by Palestinian security service chief Yusef Nasser, Abeid was asked about his connection to the DFLP, and told several times to sign a document renouncing violence if he wanted to be released.

A Palestinian officer told him the front had challenged Palestinian authority, and embarrassed it by demanding the release of all prisoners held by the Israelis. Another said they had to arrest a number of oppositionists after the ambush, to placate the Israelis.

After the atrocity at the Palestine mosque, even some of Arafat's former allies among the liberal bourgeoisie are fearful. Hanan Ashrawi, former spokeswoman for the Palestinian peace delegation, said the use of live ammunition against a crowd could not be justified. 'This is a dangerous situation. A red line that should never have been crossed has been crossed.'

It is ironic that Hamas, which at one time enjoyed behind-the-scenes encouragement from Israeli authorities as a counterweight to the nationalists, is today their bugbear, and admired as such by militant young Palestinians.

It is the poverty and frustration in Gaza, and the widespread feeling among Palestinians that they have been betrayed by everyone, that leads young people to applaud desperate actions, and follow leaders who offer neither hope nor freedom.

To overcome this legacy and build a working-class, revolutionary movement worthy of their trust will be no mean task, but it is a necessary one.

Kosovo people suffer under Serbian state violence

AMNESTY International has issued a statement on the Kosovo region of the former Yugoslavia, and the exploitation of Albanian people there by the local Serbian and Montenegrin authorities.

Ethnic Albanians constitute 85 per cent of Kosovo's population. Police violence forces a lot of young people to flee to the West. The police target all citizens active in the 'parallel' society created by the Alba-

persecution. These include political leaders, trades unionists, professors, human rights campaigners and even athletes.

The violation of human rights has taken place under cover of a 'search for weapons'. In these searches furniture is smashed and men, women and sometimes children are threatened and injured.

In one case an 18-year-old student was arrested on the bus on his way home. At the police

and drew a Serbian national cross on his breast.

Given that the police are not punished, Amnesty considers these moves an extension of the government's political line, which aims to control Kosovo by terror.

Within the police force itself some 4,000 Albanians have been sacked or replaced by Serbian or Montenegrin officers.

Since mid-1993 the government of the 'new Yugoslavia'

human rights organisation, including Amnesty, to the province of Kosovo.

The Amnesty report, published recently, prints photographs and personal testimonies of police attacks.

As is mentioned in the report, 'the photos show the Albanians' wounds, but not the humiliation, hurt and anger of the victims and their families at these attacks, which are an everyday occurrence'.

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