

# 35 dead after Tuzla shelling

UP TO 35 people were killed and 150 injured in Serb Chetnik shelling of a Bosnian army barracks in the so-called United Nations 'safe area' of Tuzla, in north-east Bosnia. The attack came in reprisal for a Bosnian military offensive, last Monday, after a four-month truce.

United Nations sources reported the movement of more than 2,000 BiH army troops towards Serb positions on the Majevica mountains north and east of Tuzla, and said this was followed by an artillery barrage.

Tuzla hospital, schools, and other civilian targets were fired on from these positions before Christmas.

Heavy fighting was also reported on the slopes of Mount Vlasic to the north of Travnik, 60 miles south-east of Tuzla.

Bosnian control of the Majevica mountains is necessary if the Brcko corridor — the northern route campaigned for by Workers

BY GEORGE ANGUS

Aid for Bosnia — is to be opened for aid convoys, and if Serbian supplies lines to Serb occupied areas are to be severed. It is therefore of immense strategic importance.

In the past month there have been reports of up to four aircraft landings at Tuzla airport — all receiving attention from the international press.

But in the same period, there have been more than 62 well-documented and illegal flights from Serbia to the Serb-held Krajina region in Croatia, which have not been reported.

## GREETINGS TO TUZLA DELEGATION

These greetings from British trade unions have been sent to the three delegates from Tuzla district trades union council, whose tour of Britain ended this week. The greetings were received at a social for the delegates last Tuesday at the National Union of Journalists' headquarters in London. Scottish TUC deputy general secretary Bill Speirs attended the event and handed over a 10,000 Deutschmarks (£4,000) cheque for the Tuzla council

From Inland Revenue Staff Federation general secretary Clive Brooke:

I SEND fraternal greetings to Fikreta Sijercic, Ivica Segat and Resad Husagic.

The news that the town of Tuzla in Bosnia is being shelled and that 35 people have been killed comes as a blow and is a tragedy not only for the people of Tuzla, but for all of us.

On behalf of the 57,000 members of the IRSF I send con-

lences to the workers of Tuzla and I wish them good fortune in their fight for a multi-cultural life against racism and fascism.

I deeply regret that our three trade union colleagues return to a war situation and trust that they will find their loved ones unscathed by the recent shelling.

The good wishes of IRSF members goes with them.

Communications Workers'

Union North West regional secretary Carl Webb:

WE WERE saddened to hear about the further outbreak of violence in Tuzla.

Having met with a member of your delegation who explained to us in detail the problems that exist in Tuzla, I have no doubt that recent events are a cause of great concern to us all. On behalf of all North-West CWU members I would like to express our continued support in your present struggle.

Liverpool trade union council secretary Pat Harvey:

LIVERPOOL trade union council sends its support to the people of Tuzla.

We recognise, through your visit, that the trade unions and communities in Tuzla are struggling to keep an open and united existence and we strongly con-

demn any action against these courageous people.

Our thoughts are with you, along with our continued support.

On behalf of Rolls-Royce senior shop-stewards' committee, Stephen Taylor:

FIRST of all we, the trade unions of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, thank you for your visit to Crewe on 13 March.

It has enabled us to speak from an informed view about the real issues in Bosnia.

We are saddened to hear the latest news of yet more fighting and bloodshed. Our hearts go out to you and your families and we hope you will all soon be able to live in peace.

Transport and General Workers' Union North West regional secretary Bob Owens:

THE Transport and General Workers' Union, North West, supports the unions and the working people of Tuzla in their resistance against ethnic cleansing and condemns the recent attack on Tuzla.

We extend our solidarity and support to the people of Tuzla.

Fire Brigades Union No.9 region chair Neil Thompson:

THE Fire Brigades Union on Merseyside sends you a message of support and solidarity to your cause.

We will do all in our power to assist the workers of Tuzla and Workers Aid for Bosnia in your attempts to secure freedom and peace in Tuzla.

Please take this message back to Tuzla to the workers and comrades in struggle.

United we stand to defend the working class.



The three Tuzla district trades union council delegates visiting Kvaerner Govan shipyard in Glasgow on 16 March

Photo: Faruk Ibrahimovic

## International workers' solidarity on the move

BY FARUK IBRAHIMOVIC

THE Tuzla trade union delegation's tour of England and Scotland ended this week. The three Bosnians were tired after the two-week tour but this was made up for by the great response they received at each place they visited.

Their first stop was London, followed by Birmingham, Crewe, Leicester, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Newcastle.

They were welcomed everywhere and everybody wanted to get more information about the present situation in Tuzla and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

They were met by members and officials of many trade union bodies, including the TUC, the Scottish TUC, the National Union of Mineworkers, the Communications Workers' Union, the National Union of Teachers and others.

They also met representatives of a number of Labour councils, including the mayors of Brighton, Camden, Liver-

pool, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and councillors from Bolsover, Manchester and other places.

One of the Bosnian delegates was a miner from Tuzla, and the three met women from the Parkside pit camp that fought for more than two years against the closure of the last pit in Lancashire.

Many trade union representatives offered some aid as their initial contribution. They all supported the July convoy being organised by the Tuzla trades union council — some will provide a truck, some will give

money to cover lorry costs, and many will join the convoy.

They all showed their solidarity with the Tuzla workers, who have been fighting for nearly three years against Serb Chetnik attacks to protect their multi-ethnic city and to stop the division of their country.

The support for the Tuzla people demonstrates that international workers' solidarity is awakening. They did not respond to the Bosnian workers' appeal at the beginning of the conflict, but now workers' solidarity is on the move.

PUBLIC MEETING  
**Japanese workers' movement**  
Sunday 26 March  
4pm, Conway Hall,  
Red Lion Sq.,  
London WC1 (tube: Holborn)  
Speaker: He Go Chi, a union activist for almost 50 years.  
Organised by Iranian Refugee Workers' Assoc.



# Another bank crisis

**HARD on the heels of the collapse of Britain's oldest merchant bank, Barings, comes the crisis at France's largest state-owned bank, Credit Lyonnais.**

A \$10 billion hole has been discovered in Credit Lyonnais's accounts, a sum only slightly smaller than the national income of Luxembourg.

The story is a familiar one. High-risk speculation, especially in property, dodgy dealing by some of the bank's senior employees, and Credit Lyonnais's involvement with shady politicians, all these lie behind the near-collapse of Credit Lyonnais.

The bank lent heavily to businessman and prominent politician Bernard Tapie. Credit Lyonnais has had criminal prosecutions for fraud and embezzlement launched against some of its employees.

The French government has put together a rescue plan that involves the sale of assets on a huge scale, as well as further loans from the French state. The rescue plan, made public after months of behind-the-scenes arguing, will mean putting a halt to much of Credit Lyonnais's activities outside France, as well as the liquidation of many of its assets in French companies.

The plan is certain to mean big losses for the bank's workers, and a hefty bill for the taxpayer to pick up. The unions fear that as many as 10,000 workers will be sacked.

'In the best liberal tradition, the managers make the mistakes and the workers end up paying the counterpart demanded by the state shareholder,' said a member of the French bankworkers' union.

Even if the plan is successful, Credit Lyonnais's debts will not be cleared until 2014.

\* \* \* \* \*

**THE Credit Lyonnais crisis has its origins in the bank's surge of buying in 1989-91. This short period saw the bank's loans increase by 35 per cent, and its industrial holding shoot up by 200 per cent.**

These wild activities were driven by the desperate need of France's most powerful bank to secure its place in the ever-more ruthless competitive international banking system. Credit Lyonnais's aim was to become the 'Deutschebank of Paris', in other words a powerful industrial bank along German lines. These ambitions now lie in tatters.

It is this intensifying competition between the American and European financial institutions that stands in the background of the crisis at Credit Lyonnais.

These same pressures drove Barings into its Far Eastern activities; in the case of Barings it was powerful competition from the much bigger US acceptance houses that forced London's gentlemanly bank into high-risk dealing in Singapore.

Credit Lyonnais was hit by the continuing recession in the French economy and the surge in long-term interest rates.

Crucially it brought a slump in the vast amounts of property that the bank had acquired during its buying spree; it also meant a drop in the value of the assets of those to whom the bank had lent money.

Through one of its Dutch subsidiaries, Credit Lyonnais had lent heavily to two businessmen who invested in a high-risk Hollywood film production. One of these is now in a Swiss jail.

Other major losses arose from the activities of Althus, a high-risk investment house run by Jean Henin, known as the 'Mozart of finance'.

The near-demise of one of France's most prestigious banks occurs against a background of continuing turmoil in the world's currency markets, with the European Union's financial chiefs openly blaming their US counterparts for having deliberately allowed the dollar to slide to give US exports greater advantage in world export markets.

One thing is sure: in the coming period Credit Lyonnais will not be the last bank to face disaster.

# Letters

## Stop cuts in Oxford

THE government wants to cut millions of pounds from funding to local councils in Oxfordshire. The county council alone has been told to cut more than £25 million from education, social services, the fire brigade and elsewhere.

The 7 per cent cut will mean bigger school classes, fewer home-care assistants and hundreds of lost jobs. There will be fewer fire officers, fewer library books and more deaths on our roads.

These damaging cuts are unnecessary and will hurt Oxfordshire's children and old people most. Council services have already been cut to the bone but the people of Oxfordshire have again and again voted for better services.

We want to stop all the cuts in council spending, at county and district level. Public protest has already forced the government to back down over £2 million of cuts.

Write to your MP. We have organising meetings every Friday. We can be contacted on 01865 251441 and 777851.

Oxfordshire Stop the Cuts  
Oxford

## Allying with the obstacle?

THERE is a problem with Cliff Slaughter's argument in 'Clause Four and the building of a socialist party' (Workers Press, 4 March).

He argues correctly that the trade union bureaucracy is an obstacle to the working class overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism.

At the same time he calls on socialists to defend Clause Four. This is a form of words that he knows represents the policies of nationalisation, public ownership and co-operatives. He also knows that these are policies the bureaucracy promotes to stop a socialist consciousness emerging within the working class.

This argument is dishonest if it entails allying with the same forces that he knows are an obstacle to socialism. (It is not true, for example, as Slaughter states, that Marxists have the same 'ultimate aim' as left social democrats.) It is misleading if it entails arguing that Clause Four represents a socialist rather than a social-democratic (or, here in Scotland, a nationalist) programme.

Slaughter forgets that a sizeable minority of the working class in Britain has rejected left-wing social democracy.

These workers want free fuel, free transport, and free 24-hour child care, not more bureaucratic forms of administration. They want a shorter

working week with no loss of pay, control over jobs, and a living income in or out of work, not full employment.

They want to think about how to bring into being a classless society world-wide, not how to protect the privileges of bureaucrats. They want to go forwards, not backwards to the Labour victory of 1945.

Slaughter's arguments ignore the consciousness of the most advanced workers, young and old. Such workers have long rejected the Labour Party as a means to socialism.

His piece would have been different had he, following Terry Brotherstone's article on the clause's history, examined the arguments connecting the anti-socialist origins of the clause with the trade union bureaucracy and 'left' intelligentsia that support it today. It would be good to read a critical assessment of these arguments.

It would have been better had Slaughter used his knowledge of Marxism to criticise the political and economic content of the clause. This might have encouraged a debate on the nature of a socialist society and how it differs from the social democracy that involves readers within the confines of Britain.

Paul B. Smith  
Govan, Glasgow

## Labour unfit

IN HIS Personal Column of 11 March, Peter Fryer refers to Newham's Local Studies Library at Stratford, east London, as a source of rare material on the history of black struggles in Britain.

This library also houses unique collections of material on the history of the labour movement, especially in and around east London where many remarkable developments took place.

Among these were the election of the first Labour MP, and the first Labour council. During the early stages of the Labour Party's development there were many lively and active organisations which opposed Keir Hardie's concept of the party — in essence, one without programme dominated by the trade union bureaucracy — and maintained independent working-class politics.

Newham council's Labour group has voted at a secret meeting to slash funding to the Local Studies Library and dismiss its librarian [see Personal Column, 18 March] — this despite large petitions from the public, and threats of strike action by members of the public service union, Unison, in other libraries.

The Labour group also voted to close the local arts centre. Last year they voted to dismantle the local museum service.

These decisions are being made as the Labour council seeks to reduce the level of council tax this year; the Stratford area, which is losing its arts centre, museum and local studies library, is also the centre of a 'City Challenge' business promotion scheme which pours government capital into the area.

The Labour Party has not only shown itself unfit to carry the workers' political heritage, it is now proving itself in practice not even a fit custodian for the physical heritage of the workers' movement.

J.J. Plant  
London E7

## Their just deserts

TORIES, like Tony Blair, must have been satisfied with the outcome of the main resolution at the Scottish Labour Party conference [which voted to ditch Clause Four]. They do not like Blair, but Tony Benn and the left in that party are an absolute anathema.

It looks as if the rise of Tony Blair is irresistible and, barring accidents, he will be the next prime minister.

Labour Party members are about to get their just deserts.

As much as Benn and the left have made an outstanding contribution to the great ideal of democratic socialism, their continuous allegiance to the Labour Party is their Achilles' heel.

Their true comrades lie with the host of small and medium-sized socialist groups outside the Labour Party proper, and they should be joining with them to form a new mass socialist party that must, sooner or later, burst in on the mainstream of British politics. Glad to learn the 'Financial Times' came to that conclusion, but Benn and other left-wingers should pay attention to what Cliff Slaughter is advancing.

John P. Mathieson  
Glenrothes

## Furore not a plot

I DID not claim that the furore over Clause Four is a plot, which is what Cliff Slaughter (11 March) reads into my letter on the Labour Party.

What I said was that this furore can only have the effect of helping to regenerate a bankrupt Labour Party.

Slaughter's article shows that he has not understood the crux of class relations in Britain today. He espouses an objectivist view according to which the problems confronting the working class are primarily organisational rather than ideological. This explains why he thinks the Defend Clause Four campaign is of use to the working

class.

Slaughter's outlook is a very complacent one, which sits ill with Trotskyism. It does nothing to recognise the ideological crisis of the working class and in particular the crisis within the ranks of Trotskyism.

Rather than hoping against hope that the struggles of the working class will resolve our problems as Trotskyists, we have the responsibility to develop Marxist theory in order that the vanguard of the working class can have the ideological tools it needs for the class struggle.

It is only by taking on board this responsibility that Trotskyism can develop and play its rightful historical role.

Jane Williams  
London N4

THE EDITOR sees nothing in Jane Williams's extensive correspondence to Workers Press that carries out her programme of 'recognising the ideological crisis of the working class . . .', 'developing Marxist theory', etc. A gratuitous piece of sarcasm has been removed from the beginning of the letter.

## Workers' control

IN HIS article 'Nationalisation, Clause Four and workers' control' (25 February), Geoff Pilling gives a good account of the nationalisation carried out by the Attlee Labour government after World War II. However, in spite of the title, there was hardly anything in it about 'workers' control'. Could we please have an article explaining the WRP's ideas about this very important issue?

D. Cuckson  
Ilford, Essex

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## Coming soon

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**SATURDAY 1 APRIL:** Groundswell: a day for independent unemployed activists to get together and sort it out. East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford. Organised by Oxford Unemployed Workers' & Claimants' Union. Tel: 0865 723750. Fax: 0865 724317.

**SUNDAY 30 APRIL:** GMB May Day '95 free family festival on Clapham Common, 12 noon to 8pm. Speakers and live bands.

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

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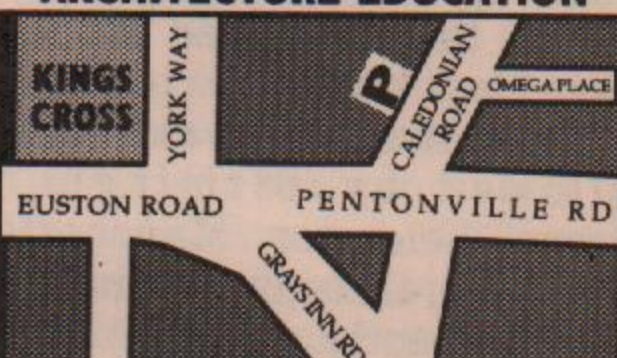
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# NHS pay scandal: build for strike action now!

**MIDWIVES have overwhelmingly voted to change their no-strike policy, which has been held by their organisation for 100 years.**

The Royal College of Midwives' decision was carried by an 80 per cent majority in a ballot of members, and was their response to the health service pay review bodies' derisory 1 per cent pay increase for 1994-95.

The Royal College of Nursing is expected to carry out a similar ballot next month.

Thursday 30 March will see demonstrations outside hospitals throughout the country as nurses, midwives, health visitors and physio- and occupational therapists from Unison, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and the Health Visitors' Association show their anger on 'NHS Fair Pay Day'. This event is due to begin at 12noon.

All these workers are covered by review bodies that recommend levels of pay for nurses, midwives and professions allied to medicine (PAMs). Similar review bodies, inside and outside the health service, gave 2.5 per cent to hospital doctors, 3 per cent to GPs, 2.7 per cent to teachers, between 2.5 and 3.2 per cent to the armed forces.

Some senior civil servants got a £40,000 increase equivalent to 27 per cent. Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley gets £55,292 a year after a 4.7 per cent hike in MPs' pay last year. Health trust bosses got an average 6.6 per cent rise last year.

## Negotiate

The pay review bodies (PRB) said that nurses and PAMs could negotiate an extra 0.5 to 2 per cent at local level but these were recommended to include conditions of service, allowances, etc. These were all previously set at a national level.

This would give trusts the opportunity to cut unsocial hours payments, sick pay, payments for psychiatric and geriatric work, and other allo-

BY STUART CARTER  
SALFORD MENTAL HEALTH  
UNISON BRANCH SECRETARY

wances. The government has told trusts that they must introduce performance-related pay and the PRB recommendations give them the opportunity to do this — although most trusts haven't got a clue how to measure the performance of staff.

The underlying government strategy is to move away from national bargaining and national agreements on pay and conditions and leave it all to local negotiations.

## Lost

With national bargaining the better-organised workers protect the weaker sections. This will be lost with local bargaining where trusts will reduce pay and conditions and there will be little prospect of united national action to fight back. Wages will spiral downward in real terms.

So far very few trusts have offered more than 1 per cent.

The government is not providing any more money to pay the nationally agreed 1 per cent, let alone any additional increases.

It has said that trusts and health authorities must find the money from existing budgets. Employers have been told to make 3 per cent 'efficiency savings'.

In other words any pay rises will be paid for by cutting jobs, staffing levels or services. This is similar to the process in education where teachers' jobs have been slashed for schools to meet their budgets.

It is the combination of all these factors that has angered health workers.

The Royal College of Midwives is now to hold a ballot on industrial action to improve the offer. Members will be pre-

sented with a series of options from withdrawing goodwill and working to grade, right up to strike action.

The Royal College of Nursing threat to end its no-strike policy seems unlikely to succeed.

The RCN only admits qualified nurses into membership, who are often more concerned with promotion than pay, and one of its main recruitment tools is the no-strike stance.

Any nurse who decides that strike action is necessary to improve pay and conditions simply

switches from the RCN to the public sector union, Unison.

Unison represents 50 per cent of all nurses — qualified and unqualified.

For them to take strike action on the union's policy of a 3 per cent fully-funded national pay award requires a consultation period which could be followed by a ballot.

But last year, Unison refused to ballot over performance-related pay for ancillary, administrative and clerical and ambulance staff, despite consul-

tation showing a majority in favour of strike action. Pressure from below on the Unison hierarchy will be needed to prevent another such a betrayal.

By 30 March other NHS staff will have received their pay offers. They are expected to be similar or worse than the PRB offers to nurses and PAMs. A national dispute could draw in all NHS staff.

There seems little chance of the government backing down without a national strike. Why should it when it sees the

leaders of Unison whingeing about the awards but not committing themselves to any decisive national action, after having backed down over a ballot last year.

Even the Royal College of Midwives' leaders say publicly that strike action will be unlikely. Junior health minister Gerard Malone is trying to sound tough. 'There is no place for industrial action in the NHS', he said.

He must be made to eat his words!

## Black women lead Hackney commemoration

BY BOB ARCHER

BLACK women, the relatives of victims of state brutality, led a march through Hackney last Saturday.

This eighth annual commemoration focused attention on the fate of those who died at the hands of the police and the immigration authorities in the borough.

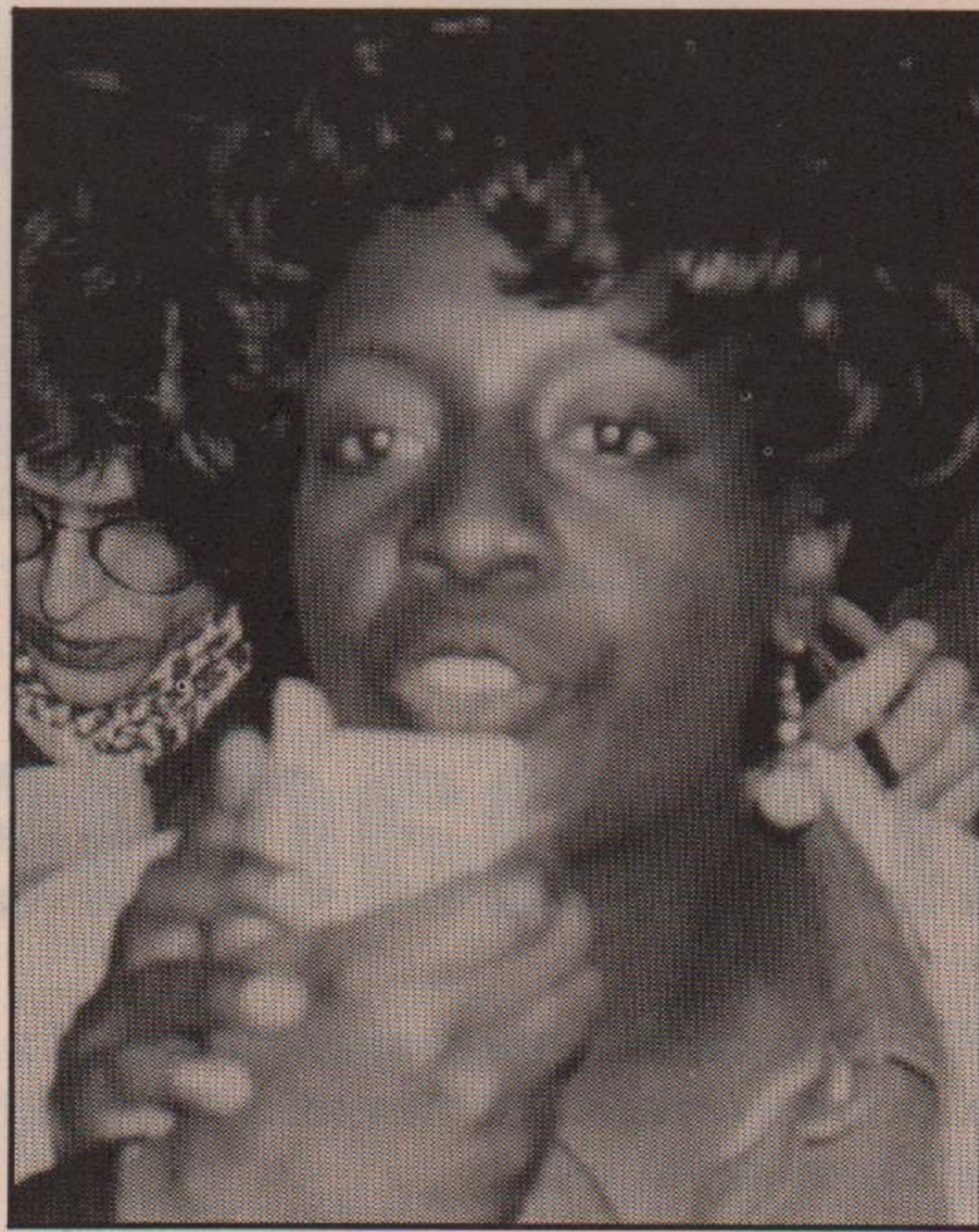
The march, followed by a lecture by solicitor Gareth Pierce in memory of Trevor Monerville, was organised by Hackney Community Defence Association and the Colin Roach Centre.

The march started at Portelet Court, a tower block on the de Beauvoir estate, where Kwanele Siziba from Zimbabwe fell to her death following a raid by immigration officials.

Residents looked on in silence as relatives placed wreaths on the spot where Kwanele died.

The demonstrators then marched up Kingsland Road towards Stoke Newington. Hackney trades council was noticeably absent, although Tower Hamlets trades council proudly brought its banner with its echoes of many struggles against racism.

The Kwanele Siziba Memorial Campaign banner was followed by a placard calling for



Sister of Kwanele Siziba speaks (left); and last Saturday's memorial march through Hackney



condemned police and immigration department racism as part of an attempt to eliminate the black community.

Julie Southey of the African Liberation Support Campaign said:

'Before we all depart, it is important to know why we are

here. We have marched so many times against the British police.

'The number of wreaths is countless. It is important for us to continue our fightback.

'We are not here as victims. We are here to fight the racism of the British police.'

## Lords strengthen anti-union laws

BY MIKE COOKE

EMPLOYERS can now victimise against union members, the House of Lords has decided.

In a judgement passed on two cases of trade unionists insisting on the right to be represented by their unions — involving three Southampton dockers and a 'Daily Mail' journalist — the Lords found in favour of the employers, Associated Newspapers and Associated British Ports.

The Southampton dockers, represented by the Rail Maritime and Transport union, lost

between £16 and £25 when they refused to sign personal contracts. They insisted on their terms and conditions being negotiated by their union.

They won their case at an industrial tribunal, lost at the Employment Appeal Tribunal but the Appeal Court found in the dockers' favour.

An identical legal course was followed by National Union of Journalists' member Dave Wilson. He was one of about 15 workers at the 'Daily Mail' who refused to sign a new contract which derecognised the union and changed terms and conditions of employment in exchange for a 4.5 per cent pay rise.



Kwanele Siziba

the release of Malcolm Kennedy. Kennedy, his supporters claim, is wrongly in jail for the killing of cellmate Patrick Quinn.

A placard also recalled the death of Suji Lapite at the hands of the police.

## Defend school meals service in Hounslow

SCHOOL meals staff have voted by a massive majority to take part in a one-day stoppage to defend the service in Hounslow, west London. Action day is Monday 3 April and will include a march of staff, parents, pupils and supporters from Thornbury playing fields at 11.30am.

As part of their budget cuts for 1995-96 Hounslow council intends to make more than 50 school meals workers redundant, over 20 per cent of the borough service's entire staff.

Parts of the plan are cuts in pay and the worsening of conditions, including: breaking national and local agreements; ending funding of trade union representation; and stopping two cleaning days allowed to school meals staff. Productivity bonuses and a profit sharing scheme have already gone. 'Casual' staff are employed at £3.80 an hour when the national minimum rate is £4.39.

School meals staff are determined to defend the service,

their jobs and their conditions of employment.

'The school meals service is an integral part of our education service and our community,' says a letter from Unison manual workers' group branch secretary Iain Raymond to chairs of governors and headteachers.

## Support

'We are asking for the support of governing bodies, teaching and non-teaching staff,

and their trade unions, parents, pupils, and all those in our community who recognise the importance of this vital service.'

The march will go through Hounslow High Street to a lobby outside the civic centre at 1pm.

This action is officially supported by Unison London region, Hounslow trades union council, and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils (GLATC). All are welcome to come and support the defence of the school meals service.

**Demonstrate in support of sacked T&G Chelmsford bus drivers**  
25 March, 10am  
Central Park, Chelmsford

**GROUNDSWELL**  
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## Inside left

### Light dawns on 'Morning Star'!

THE delegates from the Tuzla trade union council in Bosnia, who are touring Britain, have won the hearts and minds of sister and other trade unionists wherever they have gone, raising the need to respond with solidarity.

Even the 'Morning Star' (18 March) carried a sympathetic report, 'From Tuzla united', by Andrew Clark, quoting Fikreta Sircic's assurance to meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh that, after three years of war, 'the trade unions remain united against divisive ethnic laws. We work together regardless of ethnic, religious or party origin.'

Clark noted the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) was backing the Tuzla trade unionists' visit, and had raised thousands of pounds in aid. Reporting Resad Husagic's call for support for a aid convoy in Italy, Clark recalled how Tuzla miners gave a day's pay per month to British miners in the 1984-85 strike.

The 'Morning Star' correspondent made a little mistake, saying the Tuzla delegation 'will also be touring England and Wales'. Most of its tour south of the border had taken place before it reached Scotland, or the pages of the 'Morning Star'. And Clark didn't mention Workers Aid for Bosnia, though the STUC deputy general secretary Bill Speirs has acknowledged its pioneering role.

Such small points apart, Clark's recent report is welcome, and I wish him well. He's up against an editorial policy which, if an item in the same issue ('Washington silent on Bosnia alliance') is anything to go by, remains steadfastly anti-Socialist. The 'Morning Star', like the BBC, insistently refers to Bosnians inaccurately as 'the Muslims'.

But the 'Morning Star's' item on the Tuzla visit puts the old Stalinist dogma streets ahead of 'Socialist Worker' in my estimation. Whenever that paper mentions Bosnia, it delivers a patronising homily on how workers should unite. But it is kept as quiet about the Tuzla trade unionists' visit as it does about Workers Aid.

### Rank hypocrisy

During the 1984-85 miners' strike I formed a support group in the London hospital where I worked. I collected money and gave out leaflets.

But when I suggested we mention in the leaflets a police attack on a hospital workers' picket line in Manchester, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members on our committee thought that was 'too political'. I argued that workers were being police attacking miners on television every night, so why not mention them that it could happen to us, too?

The miners' support group linked different sections within the hospital, previously kept apart. Though it was wound up without discussion when the strike ended, we met a year later to discuss struggles in the area's hospital. I proposed launching a news bulletin to keep everyone informed. SWP members said it wasn't practical. It would cost too much. We must wait for the official unions to do something. Remembering the SWP's reputation for 'rank-and-fileism', I was surprised. Soon afterwards they produced their own, 'Socialist Worker' bulletin.

Now Tony Cliff of the SWP says it's time for the 'rank and file' to lead. His followers are raising the funds wherever they go. Nowt like that of spontaneity, I say!

Charlie Pottins



A detail from Delacroix's painting of the gravediggers' scene from 'Hamlet'. Was Hamlet mad?

# The madness of Prince Hamlet

**TOM OWEN says the impressive results of a survey of working people's views on Hamlet may be a good sign for the level of political consciousness**

I HAVE remarked before in Workers Press that Shakespeare's Hamlet has entered the popular imagination as the noble Danish prince whose will to revenge his father's death is paralysed (25 February).

What everyone may not know is that a whole repertoire of phrases has passed into common usage from this one play: 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark'; 'to thine own self be true'; 'hoist by his own petard'; 'to be or not to be'; 'the lady doth protest too much'; 'frailty thy name is woman'; 'to the manner born'; 'a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance'.

But I had not realised the extent of the awareness of the predicament of the 'Prince' in the population at large.

The Almeida Theatre Company is currently presenting 'Hamlet' at the Hackney Empire in east London. The 'Independent on Sunday' (5 March) carried the results of a random survey of people in Hackney who were asked the question: 'Was Hamlet mad?' The sample included people of different ages, backgrounds and occupations. But for the most part they were working or lower-middle-class people, with the exception of one trainee solicitor.

What was remarkable about their answers was not just their sophistication, but that the interpretations in them covered nearly all of the range of views, with the exception of the most esoteric theories, of 20th-century Shakespearean scholars and drama critics.

This raises interesting issues about 'popular culture', 'taste' and what Marxists used to call 'the cultural level of the masses'. The following were some of the responses.

Stuart Cottage, a trainee metal worker: 'Hamlet wasn't a nutter, he was weird. He had a way about him that made people listen. I saw it at the Hackney Empire but I don't think they portrayed him that well, he was too psychotic. I would have played him more philosophical.'

Saul Fajerman, who works as a temp: 'Hamlet was clever, he feigned madness. He did it because he was confused about whether to believe his father's ghost or whether he should murder his uncle.'

'He feigned insanity to take stock of the situation and drop out of normal life. It was a good way of buying time to decide what to do next. If I was in his situation I think I would go mad.'

Paul Sheehan, a council worker: 'Hamlet had a few problems but he wasn't mental, he was unlucky. Things were thrust upon him; his stepfather had killed his old man and married his mother. He had an Oedipus complex and topping his girlfriend's father didn't help him at all.'

### Troubles

Eileen, a passer-by: 'What's mad? People like Hamlet have troubles in their life which can send them over the edge but not out of their minds. Hamlet had to be in a state of temporary madness — it can happen to anyone.'

Others also had some interesting comments. Liz, a psychiatric nurse, thought he wasn't insane because he wasn't deluded or psychotic. David, a publican, thought he was 'introspective' and 'dedicated to the people around him'. He also thought that the late Labour Party leader John Smith could have been a 'latter-day Hamlet'!

There are two questions that need to be addressed about this apparently lighthearted survey.

First, what is the origin of the knowledge of Shakespeare's work among the population? The discrimination displayed by those surveyed rules out some kind of folklore. If it is their schooling then this says something about the instrumentalist ideologies of the 'progressive' left and the 'radical' right of the educational bureaucracies.

Both of them, in their different ways, are attempting to destroy the notion of education as a cultural practice in favour of 'training', as if people were a pack of laboratory rats.

The other origin of cultural knowledge among the 'masses' — far more disturbing for the established powers and far more exciting and hopeful for socialists — is self-activity. Some educationalists much regret what they see as the disappearance of the self-taught manual worker. Whatever their achievements, and they were impressive, most of these workers were men and, tragically, were educated and trained under the influence of Stalinism and Stalinist intellectuals.

As the state more and more cuts the funding to education, many workers not only will be, but are, looking to their own means to provide for their cultural development. As Marxists we have to understand the meaning of such changes. To do so we have also to rethink and rework some of the theoretical gains of Marxism, especially on class-consciousness.

Lenin's thesis in 'What is to be Done?', that the working class 'exclusively by its own effort is able to develop only trade-union consciousness', has been used to justify the missionary existence of socialist sects whose way of life was forced on them by Stalinism.

The historic constraint of Stalinism no longer exists and we now

have the opportunity to engage not only with the limits of trade-union consciousness, but with the 'embryonic' communist consciousness, in whatever forms they may appear.

'Advanced' capitalism will inevitably create an advanced working class, as well as an increasingly desperate lumpenproletariat (underclass) whose political role is problematic. If this underclass is led by the communist working class, it, as with the peasantry, will be drawn into the struggle for socialism rather than fall under the influence of fascism.

Second, as the people in the survey were able to discuss with apparent ease and sophistication the icons of English renaissance culture, might they not have some equally pertinent things to say about such other areas of culture as the media, information technology, or, God forbid, politics!

Political polls are both a circus and an industry. Nobody would conduct a survey on people's responses to Marx's 'Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains', or the famous phrase 'Revolution is the festival of the oppressed'. But it would be interesting to see the responses. I suspect they would shake us.

Engagement with class-consciousness can never be a matter of mass surveys. But the few comments on the madness of a fictional prince may suggest to us that the proletariat, although cultureless in terms of institutional ownership and power, is not 'uncultured' in the sense that the cultural elites imagine.

Quite the opposite. The proletariat is the only class that, paradoxically, wants to defend humanity's cultural capital, which has been accumulated through the suffering and agony of working people.

Nobody opposes the closure of museums, libraries, hospitals and schools more passionately than the workers who service them.



# Proclamation by the Zapatista rebel government council in Mexico's southern Chiapas state

# Let the people decide

The Mexican government ordered its army to pull out of the main villages in southern state of Chiapas on 14 March, where it had been waging a war of suppression against the people, in an effort to defeat the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).  
The withdrawal follows parliament's

passing of an 'amnesty law' for 'dialogue, conciliation, and peace with dignity' on 9 March. The law suspended arrest orders against Zapatista leaders and called a halt to the army offensive.  
The Mexican government had been attempting to begin peace talks with the Zapatistas. But the guerrillas had insisted

that the army had first to withdraw from the main villages. Last week the Zapatista leaders agreed to talks.  
The proclamation below, by the Zapatista rebel government council, was issued on 24 February. It shows that the Zapatista council considered the 'amnesty law' to be an attempt to maintain

the system of laws that had caused the uprising in the first place.  
The Zapatistas, named after the legendary revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, began their uprising in Chiapas in January last year. The guerrilla war has caused an international loss of confidence and sparked off Mexico's economic crash.

THE 'law' and 'state rights' are like a made-to-measure suit that can only be worn by those who have the means to pay for it. For those who cannot afford it, all that remains of this garment are the rags left when it has been worn out and cast aside.

The 'legal framework' is like a palace gala where this suit is shown off, styled and decorated to the taste of the individual guest. However, now the doors of the palace are open and we are invited to the feast.

There are suits for all on offer. The price for entry is loss of memory. If we can forget the injustice and the marginalisation imposed on the indigenous people and peasants of Mexico, if we can forget the meaning of democracy, if we can forget our forefathers who died without forgetting — we are asked to submit.

And now begins the great festival of 'reconciliation' in the palace. Legislators attended by ushers, functionaries in their role as entertainers — clowns, acrobats — and the diners all ready and hungry for the banquet. Only the viceroy is missing, whose valet is working hard to show off the attributes of his high office.

In the meantime the new orchestra is practising the harmonies of the world première of the great symphony, 'Opera Prima', composed at the special request of the viceroy. Its title splendidly reflects the government's style: 'The law for dialogue, conciliation, and

peace with dignity' in Chiapas, a work in three movements, all *molto vivace*.

Only the special guests are missing: those who have never asked for splendid ceremonies nor worn splendid costumes. These guests — the people — do not attend the banquet.

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The federal government has created a law which it claims obliges the 'rebels' to incorporate themselves permanently into their military-political order. This new law is 'The law for dialogue, conciliation, and peace with dignity in Chiapas'.

The conflict in Chiapas has forced the federal government to real-

ise in the sharpest way what it has done — it has tried to deceive the Mexican people. This initiates, in the words of President Ernesto Zedillo, 'the basis in law and the recognition of state rights', that is, a 'suitable legal framework'.

We know that this law and this 'just state' are exactly those judicial mechanisms that are necessary if the state party is to maintain itself in power, access to which is out of bounds to the majority of Mexican men and women, so that it can pursue its path of corruption, vice, self-indulgence, neglect . . .

When a people who have taken up arms and been prepared to die for the aims of their struggle are prepared to hold a dialogue with their oppressors, it is right that they lay down a number of conditions.

A minimum demand is that guns should not be aimed at them. But if these people, whose only other option was war, succeed in winning the support and agreement of those who still believe in a peaceful solution to their demands, it is because the conflict also affects them, because they too suffer.

We all now try to break down peacefully the barriers that separate us from our objectives. We therefore demand, Mexican men

and women, that the Mexican federal army withdraws from Zapatista territory because we want dialogue. But the federal government calls on us first to submit to the law, to 'state rights', that is, the existing legal system.

They would have us accept the conditions that are the causes of oppression, injustice and misery, which we have suffered for 473 years. Even now they are preparing a new law which will force us to compromise our dignity.

We are agreed on dialogue. We want it because we still want new laws. But we cannot hold negotiations when the federal army goes into action against the civilian population, forcing the indigenous people and the peasantry to flee once more to the 'safe areas'.

These government actions certainly required a 'change of tactics' by us. The new law and all that flows from it must have the agreement of the people. We don't want more laws that don't come from the will of the people; such a demand should be a constitutional right.

So we are in rebellion. We are defending the essence of the constitution. But in the eyes of the federal government we are 'dissidents', and it sees the brothers and sisters of the Zapatistas (EZLN) as 'law

breakers' and 'delinquents'.  
Now from the 'palace of government' comes the 'amnesty law', which will destroy the hopes of all Mexican men and women for democracy, justice, liberty and peace with dignity. This law which agrees with the customs, practice and word of the people, will be judged and sentenced, but not heard.

The 'amnesty law' will be presented for the first time at a gala festival, to devour the people of Mexico.

Gentleman of the federal government! You will have to come to terms with the fact that our government is a rebel government because:

- it is of the people;
- it does not agree with your laws;
- it does not agree with the way in which the laws of our constitution are manipulated to your convenience;
- it will not accept these laws, cooked up without listening to the will of the people, nor taking into account the consequences of your own blunders; and
- it is not prepared to pay for the errors and excesses of your own indulgence.

Ernesto Zedillo! Constitutionally you owe to the people your posi-

tion as president. Today the Mexican people call on you to honour what you said at your inauguration and, in accordance with the 'legal framework' and the law, withdraw the federal army to the positions it held on 12 January 1994. This will allow peace talks to start.

We call on you to remember that sovereignty, essentially and ultimately, lies with the people, and that today the wish of the Mexican people is for negotiations for peace with justice and dignity.

Mexican men and women! In Chiapas there is no legality, only impunity. In Chiapas there are no state rights, only the rights of the state. In Chiapas there is no legal framework, only injustice. In Chiapas there are no military actions, only war crimes.

Brothers and sisters of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)! In Mexico truth has only one one territory — and it is Zapatista.

**Fraternally,**  
Democracy, justice, liberty and peace with dignity!  
For the government council of the transitional rebel state of Chiapas.  
**Gustavo Zarate, Alde Rojas, Pablo Reyes, Jesus E. Sanchez**

'We are agreed on dialogue . . . But we cannot hold negotiations when the federal army goes into action against the civilian population, forcing the indigenous people and the peasantry to flee once more to the "safe areas".'



Zapatista guerrillas have forced the Mexican government to withdraw federal troops from the main villages in Chiapas state



**Two weapons against racism**

**PERSONAL COLUMN**

CONGRATULATIONS to the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, and to Steve Cohen, on two recent publications one or other of which ought to be in the hands of every trade unionist in the country.

Designed as a handbook for trade unionists, Cohen's 'Workers' Control not Immigration Controls' (£2.50) has three distinctive features: it's comprehensive; it's written with admirable clarity; and it has a valuable historical dimension.

For Cohen is steeped in the history of the subject. A few years ago he wrote a useful history of 20th-century British immigration controls entitled 'It's the Same Old Story' (Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, £1).

So he knows that, far from being 'reasonable', 'natural' and timeless, immigration controls are in fact 'very political and they have only existed for less than a century'. The first immigration legislation in Britain, he tells us in 'Workers' Control not Immigration Controls', was the 1905 Aliens Act, designed to keep out Jews fleeing from the pogroms in tsarist Russia.

Later legislation, notably the 1919 Aliens Restriction Act, was used in the 1930s to keep out Jews fleeing the Nazis.

The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, enacted by a Labour government, deprived British passport-holders of the right to come to the UK.

The 1987 the Carriers Liability Act turned airlines into immigration control agents by penalising them for carrying passengers lacking proper documentation.

And in 1993 the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act attacked black people by removing appeal rights from visitors refused a visa to enter the UK; introduced such whirlwind procedures that a refugee arriving in this country can be deported within five days; and denied housing entitlement to homeless asylum-seekers.

And now every year more than 9,000 immigrants and refugees are held in prisons and detention centres without being charged or brought to trial.

Cohen also sketches the history of resistance to immigration controls.

The first leaflet against controls, 'A Voice from the Aliens', condemning the TUC's support for controls, was produced by ten Jewish trade unions in 1895 and launched at a London meeting addressed by Eleanor Marx and the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin.

An Aliens Defence League, based in London's Brick Lane, was formed in 1902; in the same year thousands attended a rally against controls, held in Whitechapel. And black workers organised demonstrations against the Immigration Acts of 1961, 1968, and 1971.

It is this self-organisation of those most affected by controls, Cohen insists, that has shifted the organised labour movement into questioning and criticising immigration restrictions.

His pamphlet is totally opposed to all immigration controls, which are inevitably racist: 'There cannot be non-discriminatory or non-racist controls.' He adds:

'Fundamentally immigration control is a class issue — a working class issue. This is because controls are there to determine the movement of black workers.'

Cohen denounces what is now a regular occurrence: workplace swoops by police and immigration services. And he warns against employer sanctions (laws penalising bosses for employing undocumented workers), which are simply 'a racist policing of black workers' — and this, he points out, is the way the Labour Party would most likely implement a system of "non-racist" controls:

'It is a very strange way of protecting exploited workers by transforming their bosses into stool-pigeons for the immigration service who can then deport these same workers!'

Under the heading 'For a trade union action programme against controls', Cohen calls for 'Solidarity not pity!' and 'For

workers' internationalism!'

Answering the argument that controls protect 'British' jobs, Cohen points out that capital moves to wherever labour is cheapest and most exploited:

'None of these very real issues of unemployment, poverty, child-labour and exploitation throughout the world can be resolved through "national" and nationalistic solutions. They require international strategies and solidarity and co-operation by the international trade union and labour movement.'

'The fight against immigration controls is one such strategy and one such expression of solidarity.'

'If the labour movement had the political will it could pull the plug on immigration controls and close them down.'

Cohen's other pamphlet, 'Still resisting after all these years' (£2.50) is a popular illustrated account of 'A century of international struggles against immigration controls 1895-1995'. It covers much the same ground as the historical sections of 'Workers' Control not Immigration Controls', but has an additional section on resistance to immigration controls in the US and elsewhere in the world.

Steve Cohen is activist as well as author. He has been personally involved in all the campaigns of recent years against deportation.

This wealth of experience gives his work a fine edge. He's put two sharp weapons into our hands. Let's use them.

**'Nothing to do with science'**

YET another scathing review of 'The Bell Curve' — a review which teachers and others seriously interested in the IQ controversy should on no account miss — appeared in the February issue of 'Scientific American'.

It is by Leon J. Kamin, professor of psychology at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass. Kamin's more extensive critique of the notorious book by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray is due for publication later this year in 'The Bell Curve Debate', edited by Russell Jacoby and Naomi Glauberman, to be published in the US by Times Books/Random House.

Kamin's review is not only scathing but also extremely well informed. At many critical points, he says, the calibre of the data in 'The Bell Curve' is 'pathetic'. Over and over again, the authors 'fail to distinguish between correlation and causation and thus draw many inappropriate conclusions'.

On the dependence of Herrnstein and Murray on Richard Lynn, professor of psychology at Ulster University, who heaped praise on the book in 'The Times' (see this column, 29 October and 10 December 1994), Kamin writes:

'Lynn's distortions and misrepresentations of the data constitute a truly venomous racism, combined with scandalous disregard for scientific objectivity.'

'It is a matter of shame and disgrace that two eminent social scientists, fully aware of the sensitivity of the issues they address, take Lynn as their scientific tutor and uncritically accept his surveys of research.'

Quoting 'New York Times' columnist Bob Herbert, who wrote that 'The Bell Curve' 'is just a genteel way of calling somebody a nigger', Kamin concludes:

'Herbert is right. The book has nothing to do with science.'

My thanks, by the way, are due to Dr Ellen L. Ramsay, a reader in Canada, who has been sending me interesting material on reactions to 'The Bell Curve', and whom I've not yet had time to write to.

**Peter Fryer**

**Comment**

**Do young workers celebrate their own brutalisation?**

**TOM OWEN responds to recent criticism of his review of the film 'Interview with the Vampire' (25 February)**

I WOULD like to thank Roger Horrocks for his letter to Workers Press (11 March) on my review of the film 'Interview with the Vampire'. We do not need to start a correspondence on the political correctness of vampires. Indeed, I am sure Horrocks would agree with me that they are 'incorrect'.

But Horrocks goes much further and claims that they challenge or reverse the 'social and biological order'. As to the biological order, I don't know what he means.

But, as to reversing the 'social order', this raises more interesting issues. Vampires are traditionally aristocratic, from the creations of Polidori and Bram Stoker through to Anne Rice, whose 'Interview with the Vampire' was the basis of the Neil Jordan film that I reviewed. They are usually hunted down by people who are bourgeois and Protestant and 'scientific' experts, who save both their women and the superstitious Catholic peasantry from a fate literally worse than death.

If you kill off the beast, as Stoker does in his novel, then that celebrates the victory of the enlightened bourgeoisie over obscurantism. On the other hand, if, as in Rice's work, the beasts survive, then the former slaveowners can carry on forever. Whatever the outcome, the slaves, peasants, ghetto dwellers, and women will get it in the neck.

Horrocks sees the vampire genre — and horror movies in general — as being the expres-

sion of some 'volcanic' subterranean power that breaks through the constraints of bourgeois 'normality'. He is right in terms of the sometimes confused literary metaphors we inherit from the 19th century. The demonic phantoms of bourgeois culture are both proletarian and aristocratic in origin.

In the 20th century, after the rise of Marxism and socialism, the forces of darkness and their gruesome symbolic orders are materialised, take on a political form, in Nazism. Remember, rowdy bier keller sing-songs, Wagnerian ecstasies, and gothic mythmaking were all ingredients in a lethal cocktail which makes folk and popular culture into a barbarous weapon against human culture.

Horrocks has raised some important issues on the nature of contemporary culture that goes far beyond the indulgent claims of 'popular' culture.

**'Elitist'**

I wish to raise for discussion some issues that are based on what I believe to be the 'elitist' axioms of Marxist theory.

That there is no separate thing called 'popular culture' in our period. There are the remnants of feudal, aristocratic cultures, the remains of peasant folkloric culture, but the overwhelming nature of our culture is bourgeois, and, put more precisely, imperialist. This bourgeois culture extends in all its forms from the revolutionary hymns of Beethoven to the exotic pyrotechnics of Metallica.



**AC/DC: audience trapped in a spectacle of their own alienation?**

I think it is important to make this point because it challenges what I regard as the spurious claims of the commercial market, and, I am afraid, of those socialists who ought to know better, that their products are closer to the aspirations of the oppressed, or may, indeed, be more intrinsically radical.

**Subvert**

What is regarded as 'high culture' can have ideological predispositions to the maintenance of class interest; it can also profoundly subvert it. But so-called 'popular culture' finds itself rarely in the position of penetrating and unravelling the monstrous web that has tied generations to the tyranny of

common sense, religion and superstition.

The fact that young 'working class' males watch horror movies and go to heavy-metal concerts, which may be distasteful to the middle classes because they are 'plebby' and raucous, may indicate rebelliousness.

But has it occurred to Horrocks that these young workers may be trapped, albeit temporarily, in a spectacle of their own alienation, at a feast that celebrates voyeuristically the dehumanisation of their own class?

The final 'axiom' of this letter is that the only class that has the need, interest and means to preserve and surpass the cultures of past elites is the modern proletariat.

**Trade union defence campaign begun in Pakistan after labour leader's murder**

HIRED assassins murdered Punjab Labour Federation president Arif Shah on 19 January.

The Punjab Labour Federation has set up the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign in response to this criminal act of reprisal by the employers after a successful strike.

The campaign is sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers' Alliance, the National Railway Workers' Union and the National Union of Postal Employees.

Before his assassination, Shah was leading a trade union struggle against privatisation, for a minimum wage, and for the abolition of contract and child labour.

Arif succeeded in preventing the Pakistan government from introducing the right to hire and fire in its new labour policy. Arif was cut down in the prime of his life, just 44 years old, after 27 years in the labour movement.

Workers blocked the main Lahore-Karachi highway in protest at his death and 20,000 attended Arif's funeral.

**Attacked**

A week before Shah's murder, the president and general secretary of the steel workers' union (PRU), Mahmood Butt and Miran Shah, were attacked and beaten by hired thugs.

Their only crime was the organisation of an independent trade union that directly challenged the bosses and their company unions. The Ittefaq found-



**Rally for Benazir Bhutto: Arif Shah had led a trade union struggle against privatisation and for a minimum wage**

ry is owned by right-wing leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Workers' conditions are miserable. Food prices are soaring with inflation running at more than 25 per cent (the false official figure of 14.3 per cent is even ridiculed in the newspapers).

According to conservative estimates unemployment is 10 million — and rising by 10 per cent a year. There is no unemployment benefit or welfare state. The literacy rate is a mere 14 per cent. Child mortality rates and the death of women

during child birth are among the highest in the world.

Brutal exploitation is rife. Over 1 million children work in the carpet industry, another million are employed as domestics, more than 300,000 as bonded labourers in brick kilns, together with many more in soap factories, small garages, shops, etc. Added to this are the many street traders, ragpickers and beggars.

Families are forced by extreme poverty to send their children out to work or worse. Bonded labourers are forced to take loans from their bosses at high

interest rates which means they have to accept low wages to pay them back. Workers cannot run away as there is nowhere to go. If they do run away, the rest of a debtor's family becomes liable for the debt. They are forced to sell their children into what is nothing short of slavery.

**Demands**

The Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign is based on the following demands:

- Defence of our trade unions from the physical attacks of the employers. Defend the right to organise!
- Stop the privatisation and plunder of state industries.
- A minimum wages for all.
- The abolition of child labour.
- The abolition of draconian fundamentalist laws against women. Equal rights for women.

The campaign is appealing internationally for sponsorship and believes there is a particular bond between the workers' movement in Britain and Pakistan given the terrible role played by British imperialism in the Indian sub-continent.

The campaign does not want charity — it wants solidarity!

■ All correspondence and donations to: Shahida Jabeen, Secretary, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN. All cheques payable to the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (all donations acknowledged).

Shahida is also national secretary of the PPP's women's organisation.



# NZ and Labour

THE Alliance traces its origins to working-class rejection of neo-liberal policies sprung on an unsuspecting electorate by the 1984-90 Labour government.

As a result of this Thatcherite blitzkrieg — which savaged public services, state education, jobs and pay packets — Labour Party membership was slashed by 90 per cent.

At the time, it was common to hear workers from traditionally Labour Party families vow they would never vote Labour again. Since the 1930s, Labour has been the mass party of the New Zealand working class, in a similar way to the Labour Party in Britain.

In this climate of worker indignation and disgust at Labour's treachery, Labour government MP and former president Jim Anderton resigned from the Labour Party to form the New Labour Party (NLP).

He was joined by Matt McCarten, a service workers' union organiser who had been sacked for fighting the Labour loyalists within his own union and for fighting ultra-right Labour MP Richard Prebble in the Auckland Central seat. This culminated in a brawl at a Labour Party conference.

At this time, as now, there was no Marxist party of any great significance in New Zealand.

The pro-Albanian Stalinists, the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ), were the largest group, mustering about 40 members nationwide. This later shrank to 25 last year when it merged with the International Socialists' Organisation, connected with the Socialist Workers Party in Britain.

The Moscow-line Socialist Unity Party, though claiming a number of top national trade union officials, was in the process of collapse.

Workers Power was a tiny group struggling to extend from its base at Auckland University out to the workers. The Communist League, with perhaps 20 or 30 members, often on big industrial sites, seems only capable of endless praise for Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro.

## Return

The NLP came up with a programme almost identical with the old Labour Party programme of a decade earlier — namely a return to the welfare state (Keynesianism).

It never pretended to be socialist and did not address itself directly to the working class, which in New Zealand is 80 per cent of the population.

It took up the capitalists' slogan of an 'internationally competitive' New Zealand.

The NLP attracted a lot of activists from the Labour Party — a layer which included a lot of school teachers and union officials. The NLP general membership tended to be similar —

Last week an article from New Zealand by Michael Fay described how the Alliance party was formed. Here we publish another view from New Zealand, by PETER LUSK



Auckland, New Zealand, 1990: demonstration against a neo-liberal employment contracts bill

that is, the better paid section of the working class.

In the 1990 election Labour was dumped, with a landslide victory to the conservative National Party, an employers' party which acted rather like a social-democratic party in the 1960s and 1970s.

The National Party campaigned on the slogan of a 'decent society', but immediately took up the neo-liberal policies started by Labour.

The NLP and three small middle-class parties — the Greens, Democrats and Maori-nationalist Mana Motuhake — took 14 per cent of the vote.

It was clear that the NLP was unlikely to win an election on its own under New Zealand's first-past-the-post system. And because winning elections was the be all and end all for the NLP it was necessary to look for partners.

In 1991, the Alliance was formed from the NLP, Greens, Democrats and Mana Motuhake, with the NLP providing two-thirds of the members and most of the activists.

The next year saw a by-election in Tamaki, mainly a wealthy suburb.

As election day approached, pollsters picked the Alliance to win. On the day, the Nationals won by a whisker. The Alliance had mustered a strong electoral organisation that door-knocked the electorate very thoroughly.

For 60 years, New Zealand's parliamentary politics had been dominated by the Nationals and Labour. Now there were three parties running neck and neck in the polls. However, the working class had developed a deep distrust of all politicians, and an indication that they would vote for Labour or the Alliance did not necessarily mean any deeper level of support.

The 1993 election put Alliance leader Jim Anderton to the test — he came out against the working class. The result of the election was a hung parliament in which the Alliance got 18 per cent of the vote.

The Nationals had a one-seat majority, but tradition demanded it provide a non-voting

speaker. In this situation the government could be brought down by Labour and the Alliance voting together in opposition to the Nationals.

Rather than organise for a quick kill of the anti-worker National government, Anderton went on nationwide television to prop it up with a promise of a consensus-style approach to leadership and a pledge that the Alliance would not vote to bring down the government on issues of confidence.

Labour, for its part, departed from tradition by providing the speaker from its ranks. This gave the National Party a working majority.

## Jittery

All this high-level collaborative engineering calmed the money markets, which had been jittery since election day. Big business and the investing classes declared Anderton a 'statesman' and were all over him like a rash.

Anderton resigned — sort of — late last year. This year he was largely reinstated as *de facto* leader under the title of Alliance council chairman.

Anderton's deputy — now Alliance leader — Sandra Lee capped it off by welcoming the Labour speaker to his new post in the first sentence of her maiden speech in parliament.

Safely back in government, the Nationals have continued their neo-liberal policies without a hint of the 'consensus' talked about by Anderton and Prime Minister Jim Bolger.

There have been more asset sales and a further running-down of the health service. But the pressure of working-class resistance is making itself felt.

The pace of the 'reforms' has slowed and the National Party has dumped its widely hated finance minister, Ruth Richardson, who has since resigned causing a by-election in her true-blue seat of Selwyn.

The seat has always been won by the Nationals with a very big majority, but while it has a large rural section, it also takes in a couple of working-

class suburbs in Christchurch, New Zealand's second largest city.

New Zealand voters have a habit of punishing the government in by-elections and Selwyn was no exception. In the run-up, polls showed Anderton as far and away the nation's most popular leader, and the Alliance ahead of National. On the day, the National Party beat the Alliance by a handful of votes, with workers in Selwyn giving Labour a terrible thrashing. Labour came a distant third.

In recent months, the Alliance has faded in the polls. The Nationals are showing at 43 per cent, Labour at 29 per cent and the Alliance at 19 per cent.

The present political climate is such that workers would respond positively to some gutsy policies on pay, health and housing. But the Alliance is watering down its already weak programme.

Leaders who previously talked of state housing rents at 25 per cent of a tenant's income, now talk of 'affordable' rents.

When Alliance housing spokesperson Len Richards said state houses sold to speculators should be taken back without compensation, he was called before Anderton for a dressing down and resigned.

The issue was front-page news in the media, and big business made it clear that such 'whacky' ideas could not be tolerated.

Incidentally, Richards had the full backing of his branch from the working-class Mangere electorate.

Labour has stolen a lot of the Alliance's thunder recently by stating for the first time in many years that it stands for the workers. It promised a form of progressive taxation, cribbing a policy that the Alliance thought it had for itself.

If Labour continues in this vein, it could well win back much of its traditional working-class support.

Workers will vote for Labour, not because they trust it, but on the basis that it is 'better the devil you know, than the devil you don't'.

Bronwen Handyside reports

## Two nations



### 'A good family man'

YOU may remember the furore that broke out three years ago when a 14-year-old girl, pregnant as the result of abuse by a 41-year-old man, was prevented by the Irish courts from leaving Ireland to have an abortion. Protests erupted from all sides again last week when the offender had his jail sentence drastically reduced.

Three judges, describing him as a 'hard-working, good family man who had never been in trouble before and who had surfaced from humble origins to a position of some affluence', said he had shown 'genuine remorse', and cut his sentence from 14 to four years.

With remission for good behaviour, he will probably get out in three.

The child involved was assaulted over a period of two years, from the age of 12. The man, who abused her trust in him as a close friend of her family, at first blamed a neighbouring youth for her pregnancy.

It was only after a DNA test proved that he was the father that this 'good family man' admitted his role.

The youth he had accused was bullied and beaten up as a result of his accusation, and the girl suffered through several months with the prospect of having to testify in court before he confessed.

When she was stopped from leaving Ireland for an abortion, she attempted suicide. When she was eventually allowed to go, she suffered a miscarriage before any medical intervention took place.

Because of local knowledge of her identity she was forced to leave her school, and her family had to leave their home for another area.

Her life has not just been disrupted in the short-term, the effects of sexual abuse very often last a life-time.

She and her family are understandably reported to be 'very distressed' by the court's decision.

THE judges' tender consideration for this middle-aged businessman, and indifference to the effect of their judgement on his victim, is no accident.

Most revealing is the court's failure to object to part of the case made by his defence counsel — that his crime was not so awful as some, because he used no 'duress' in carrying out his abuse.

The judicial system, in my opinion, has committed a greater crime against her than her abuser in the tacit implication that she, in some way, colluded in the crime committed against her.

It is well known that the greatest psychological damage is inflicted on victims of abuse if they feel in some way guilty of giving consent to their abusers.

But that good family man did not have to use force against her, not only because he was a 41-year-old man, and she was a 12-year-old child, but because force has already been used against her and all her female forebears for countless generations.

Perhaps the clearest example of that force was shown when this young girl was not only prevented by the law from

obtaining an abortion in her own country, but physically stopped from going to a place where she could.

THE 'duress' her abuser used arises out of the most backward attitudes to women, which prevail not only in Irish society, but are enshrined in the Irish state's very constitution.

No woman in Ireland is in possession of the most elementary right known to human beings — the right to ownership of her own body.

The 14-year-old's abuser, and many abusers of others, had little need to exert physical force on the victim. The job of convincing women and children that their own bodies do not belong to them has already been done. That is why priests, for example, can get away for decades with child sexual abuse.

The court's slashing of that good family man's prison sentence is a continuation of a centuries-old tradition of abuse.

And the 'new Ireland' so boastfully trumpeted by Sinn Fein has a rather familiar feel to it.

At this year's annual conference, backward religious prejudice triumphed yet again as Sinn Fein delegates took the lead from their executive in voting down a resolution calling for a woman's right to choose.

## How much is a life worth?

A LANDMARK judgement was made in October last year when a jury found that 20-month-old Terri-Anne Jones was unlawfully killed in a fire at the Richmond Hotel, Scarborough, in May 1994.

Richard Boddington joined a rich gravy train along with hundreds of other profiteering landlords by changing his hotel into a homeless families' hostel two years before the fire.

In November 1993 the local council served a notice requiring the hotel to meet their standards for fire safety — but no work was carried out.

In court Boddington said the fire precautions would cost £44,000 and he had told the council he could not afford to do it. When asked why he did not appeal against the notice, he said: 'It was pointless appealing against the hand that feeds me. They are my major paymasters.'

He acknowledged receiving around £28,000 through housing benefit between January and March 1994 alone.

When the fire broke out on 7 May the fire safety system was virtually inoperable.

Four-year-old Natasha told her mother how, when smoke and flames filled the room she shared with her sister Terri-Anne, she told her not to cry and to get under the bed. The older child then tried to reach the door latch, but was not tall enough.

Firefighters found Natasha unconscious on the floor in front of the door, and Terri-Anne's body under the bed clinging to a pile of her toys.

It would have cost £10 to fit the smoke seal to the door which would have saved her life.

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

# Rebuild unemployed movement

GROUNDSWELL, a national forum for independent and claimants groups, is taking place in Oxford on Saturday 1 April at the East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford OX4 1HU from 11am to 5.30pm.

Our main aim is to see if it is possible to rebuild national co-ordination amongst independent unemployed/claimant groups and activists.

We are inviting: all independent claimant and unemployed groups, individuals involved in advising for and campaigning on benefit rights, community groups and projects, trade union activists promoting the interests of the unemployed, claimants and low waged, tenant organisations, pensioners' groups, the Disability

Alliance, housing action groups, and other self-organising particular interest groups of claimants.

Although unemployment remains at a level unseen since the 1930s, government attacks on the welfare benefits system have left many of the unemployed and claimants in real poverty. In the 1920s and 1930s the National Unemployed Workers' Movement organised the unemployed, and achieved considerable success in protecting rates of benefit payments. At the start the TUC tried to destroy it, but at its peak support was so great that the TUC had to take notice.

In the early 1980s the TUC destroyed the independent claimants' movement by setting up its own Unemployed

Workers Centres, and by directing local branches not to support independent groups. Today there are only a handful of claimants' unions left, which shows how fragmented resistance has become.

The only other independent organisation that we are aware of is the National Union of Unemployed Workers (NUUW), which the TUC is attempting to destroy, again by discouraging local union support.

We feel that the TUC Combine of Unemployed Workers Centres is a hollow attempt to control the unemployed and prevent self-organisation. We believe there is a need to build an independent movement to protect the interests of claimants and the unemployed, and to challenge increasingly punitive

anti-claimant legislation. We are organising this forum to try and build that independent movement.

There is no charge for attending Groundswell. The organising work is being done by volunteers at the Oxford Unemployed Workers' and Claimants' Union, but any donations towards the cost of the forum will be welcome, whether you are able to attend or not, cheques payable to 'OUWCU'.

Groundswell is taking place at the East Oxford Community Centre, which has disabled access and toilet. Be warned that parking is very limited. Unfortunately, we cannot provide a crèche, but children are welcome.

Oxford Unemployed Workers' and Claimants' Union



# Turkish war spreads to Germany

**THE Turkish government's dirty war against the Kurdish people spread to Germany last week, with riot police wading into demonstrators in Frankfurt who raised the outlawed Kurdish flag.**

Demonstrations were held in several German cities against the Turkish state's oppression of Alawi Muslims, and over the German government's decision to deport Kurdish asylum-seekers back to Turkey, where they face persecution. The Turkish military uses German-supplied armoured vehicles in its war against Kurd guerrillas.

Troops and armed police have been sent into working-class districts of Istanbul, where people put up barricades after members of the Alawi community were killed in an armed raid by right-wing Muslim fundamentalists. There were more demonstrations in Ankara, the capital. Workers accuse the state of complicity in right-wing terrorism, and provoking religious conflict.

In Turkish-occupied Kurdistan troops and helicopters combed mountains after 18 soldiers were killed in an ambush by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas.

The legal Kurdish opposition also faces repression and state terror. Leaders and local offic-

BY DAVID DORFMAN

ers of the party HADEP, which favours Kurdish autonomy, continue to be arrested. Ahmet Karatekin, a HADEP member in Adana, was arrested by the police's anti-terror unit on 16 February.

Unit members came to his shop, in the city's Hurriyet district, and insulted him and threatened him for having sold the pro-Kurdish newspaper 'Ozgun Ulke' and similar publications, claiming the sale of these newspapers was forbidden. In fact, 'Ozgun Ulke' ('New Land') had been legal until its closure in February.

Karatekin was taken to the police headquarters in Adana where he was kept until the next morning.

'I found eight persons from my neighbourhood also being

held there,' said Karatekin. 'For three hours they (the police) beat us severely. They hit my head against the walls.'

After he was released, Karatekin went to the state prosecutor's office in Adana, where he made a written complaint about the ill-treatment he had been subjected to, and requested to be examined by a forensic physician.

## Threats

On 5 March Karatekin was one of five members of the local branch of HADEP in the Seyhan district of Adana who were taken into police custody. Two of the five were released the same day, but Karatekin, together with Hakki Kuru and Sehmuz Ozgun, were held overnight. Since then they have received frequent telephone death threats.

Officials and members of

HADEP continue to face grave risks. By the end of 1994 more than 100 officials and members of HADEP and its predecessors, HEP and DEP (both closed by the constitutional court for 'separatism'), had been killed.

This year there have been further killings. In January, two HADEP officials were shot dead in Batman by unidentified gunmen; Zeki Atlig was killed on 17 January, and Vasif Cetin on 30 January.

Sinan Tanrikulu, Firat Anli, Hanifi Isik, Serif Atmaca, and Servet Ayhan, all members of the Diyarbakir branch of the Turkish Human Rights Association (HRA), were detained on 27 February and have since been committed to Diyarbakir prison to await trial. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, in custody because of their human rights activities.

On 14 February, bus driver

Nevzat Ersonmez was abducted, reportedly by members of the anti-terror branch. His body was later found in front of the door of the company for which he worked. According to the doctor who examined Ersonmez's body, he had been deprived of food and water, the letters TC (Republic of Turkey) had been burned into several parts of his body, and there were rope marks around his neck.

## Labour leaders kidnapped and murdered in Colombia

RIGHT-WING terrorists linked with the army have stepped up their attacks on trade union and community activists in Colombia. A teacher in Cesar province has been killed in an ambush, and the body of a kidnapped community leader was found in the same area.

On 20 February, Ernesto Fernandez Fezter was driving to his home in Pailitas with his three children when three youths shot him dead. Fortunately his children, aged three to 11, were unharmed. Local people say they recognised the

youths as having been responsible for other murders of community leaders.

The killers escaped without any trouble, even though the town is under a heavy military presence to counter left-wing guerrilla activity.

Fezter was leader of the teachers' trade union, ADUCE-SAR (Asociacion de Educadores del Cesar), and a founder of the Pailitas Movement for Civic-Community Integration. The names of the movement's leaders and other local community activists have appeared fre-

quently on hit-lists circulated by right-wing groups in Cesar.

Jairo Barahoa Martinez was a member of the same movement. His body was found recently near the town of Curumani in Cesar. He had been tortured before being shot. Martinez had been taken forcibly from his home in Pailitas on 29 September last year by armed men who identified themselves as members of the security forces' anti-extortion and kidnapping unit, UNASE.

Trade union leader Rodrigo Rodriguez Sierra was forcefully abducted on 16 February from a hotel in Barranquilla, Atlantico district, by armed men who identified themselves as members of the security forces. He has not been seen since and concern for his safety is growing by the day.

Sierra is one the leaders of the olive-oil producers' union, SINTRAPROACEITE, based in El Copey, Cesar.

Witnesses say he was in the restaurant of the Hotel Diamante in Barranquilla when a group of armed men entered the hotel. They identified themselves to the manager as members of the security forces and went immediately to the restaurant where they found Sierra. He was taken violently from the restaurant. No warrant for his arrest had been presented. The armed men reportedly stated that 'he had problems with justice'.

Sierra's family and workmates made all possible efforts to locate him, without success, and submitted a writ of habeas corpus before a circuit judge in Barranquilla. But the trade unionist's whereabouts are still not known, and there are fears of the worst.

President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August last year, has said that tackling the human rights issue is a priority for his government.

But the kidnapping and murders continue. Members of the Colombian security forces responsible usually get away with it, and remain on active service.



Bosnian Shanaat Nahawand (left) was released by Bosnian Serbs at Sarajevo this week. To the north, Tuzla has come under Serb fire which killed up to 30 people

## Fury over hanging of Filipina maid

WOMEN in Manila may disrupt next month's visit to the Philippines capital by Singapore's prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, because of the hanging there of 42-year-old Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina domestic accused of double murder.

The Catholic Church has called Singapore a state 'without mercy', and left-wing groups have denounced its human rights record.

Thousands of people demonstrated outside the Singaporean embassy in Manila. Promising a hot reception for the Singapore prime minister, Liza Masa of the Gabriela group said: 'We are going to hound him. He will be sorry he ever came here.'

Flor Contemplacion, who maintained her innocence to the end, was hanged in Changi prison at dawn on 17 March. She leaves a husband and four children. Singaporean authorities went ahead with the execution despite an appeal from Philippines president Fidel Ramos, and ignored new evidence that the housemaid was framed.

Flor Contemplacion was accused of the murder of her employers' four-year-old son, and of a fellow Filipina maid, Delia Maga, in 1991. But a new witness, a Filipina domestic who had returned to the Philippines from Singapore after the

deaths, said the child drowned accidentally in the bath during an epileptic fit, and that the father killed Delia Maga, who was supposed to be looking after the boy, in a fit of anguish.

This witness, Emilia Frenilla, said she overheard the boy's father talking to her employer, and that the men decided to pin the two deaths on Flor Contemplacion, who had been a friend of Delia Maga. The Contemplacion family's new Filipino lawyer tried to get a retrial, but the Singaporean authorities rejected the new evidence.

## Epilepsy

During the trial in January 1993 neither the prosecution nor the appointed defence counsel made any submissions at the four-day hearing. Flor's Singaporean defence lawyers advised her to plead not guilty by virtue of insanity, saying she suffered a form of epilepsy which made her not responsible for her actions, but the court ignored psychiatric evidence, and sentenced her to death.

Flor Contemplacion's former cell-mate, Virginia Parumog, has claimed Flor told her she had been tortured to make her confess to the murders. She says the housemaid was forcibly drugged prior to appearing

in court, which may explain why she remained silent throughout her trial.

The gallows were employed in Singapore during British colonial rule, and retained after the country became a republic in August 1965. At least 32 people were hanged last year, the majority for drugs-related offences. The president has discretionary powers to commute death sentences, but clemency is rarely granted.

The Singapore government's favours to banking and big business have earned it admiration from Thatcherites and 'yuppie' brokers in the City of London. Critics are accused of not understanding 'Asian values' which supposedly demand stern law and order.

But the Flor Contemplacion case has focused Asian workers' anger at this capitalist regime, which some years back claimed it had uncovered a 'Marxist conspiracy' when it found Catholic nuns and social workers helping domestics form a union!

Filipinos are convinced that Flor was framed. Millions of others have been forced by poverty and unemployment to leave the Philippines and work abroad as domestics or labourers, exploited, ill-used, and easy targets for repression, frame-ups or state murder.

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