



THE COLLAPSE OF FULL-TIME WORK

OVER one-and-a-half-million people are now working in temporary, insecure and short-term jobs. This is a rise of 260,000 since 1992 as more workers are forced out of permanent jobs into temporary work. Over the same period the number in permanent work dropped by 117,000.

These are the findings of the Birmingham-based Low Pay Unit in a report published last week.

In the 12 months to autumn of last year, temporary work rose by almost 10 per cent. Agency work led the way, rising by 38 per cent over the same period.

This is often highly insecure work, with the majority of jobs not lasting beyond a 12-month period. In the vast majority of cases these workers have no rights, there are no trade unions and little control on hours of work or safety conditions.

Traditionally temporary jobs have been the area of employment for women seeking to bring in a little extra money to a family. They are usually low-paid as a result.

But with 46 per cent of these jobs now being taken by men, they are clearly being used to survive.

The government lie that those in temporary work prefer it is exposed with over 40 per cent of men and over a third of women saying they would prefer permanent jobs, if any were available.

The increase in temporary jobs has accounted for the majority of the new jobs over the last two years.

Doctored

Doctored government figures pretend that unemployment is falling. But in many regions fewer people are actually working.

Thus in the two years to 1994,

BY THE EDITOR

total employment in the north of England — North, Yorkshire and Humberside, the North West — fell by 70,000.

The total increase in employment in this period was accounted for entirely by the rise in temporary workers and a growing number of self-employed people.

Dubious

Over 17 million people live in regions which have seen no increase in employment, or one based on these highly dubious 'jobs'.

From the beginning of the month, the authorities have had increased powers to force people into jobs. If they refuse they risk losing all benefits. It is into these low-paid, temporary and part-time jobs that the unemployed will be driven.

Latest figures show that the price of manufactured goods is rising at its fastest rate for three years. If the government raises interest rates to curb the renewed inflation, this will further depress the economy and hit the poorest.

■ This is the real nature of the trumpeted Tory 'economic recovery'. In fact millions are working in sweat jobs, in conditions that increasingly resemble those of the Victorian age.

■ This is the capitalism that Blair, Prescott and company intend to manage in the interests of the employers.

March demands free Nigeria!



NIGERIANS and supporters marched through London on 1 April to demand an end to the military dictatorship in that country.

Though the central trade union organisation, the Nigerian Labour Congress, is in the hands of a government appointed administrator, the individual unions are fighting for

democracy, in particular against stringent new 'security' vetting threatened by the regime for union leaders.

The British government continues to supply arms to the Nigerian government, which are used to suppress the struggle for workers' rights.

On 27 May, the African Liberation Support Committee is organising a march to commemorate Africa Liberation Day — with the theme: 'Africa: Liberation, not just Charity'. All those who oppose the destruction and recolonisation of Africa and her peoples are welcome to come. (See details in 'Coming Soon', page 2).

What the future holds!

WORKERS PRESS will not appear on 22 April to give the production staff a decent rest over the Easter weekend and Monday, when most of the material that goes into the paper is normally prepared for the printers.

So the next issue to appear will be on 29 April to cover the preparations of the Labour Party special conference (29 April) called to vote on Blair's proposals to ditch Clause Four of the constitution and the events around May Day — International workers' day — on Monday 1 May.

After that there will be a two-week break in production as our equipment is being moved to new premises and various arrangements have to be made to continue the work of paper 'in good

order'. Keep an eye out for any new telephone or fax numbers we publish in the near future!

We hope that our readers will continue to support our extensive work in Britain and internationally. Expenses, unfortunately, will continue to come in and we would much appreciate it if supporters could send us any money they can.

Our work in southern Africa and eastern Europe also need money desperately and often come before our own needs in our calculations, so the money you send won't be wasted. Thanks in advance for your moral and financial support.

Mike Cooke
Send money payable to Workers Press or Workers International at PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Government's pension age rip-off!

THE vast majority of people could soon retire without being entitled to a state pension.

This arises from the fact that the government wants to equalise pensions at 65, which means that women will have to wait five more years for their pensions.

Yet more and more women are already retiring before the age of 60 and 750,000 men aged between 60 and 65 no longer work. They will all have to wait until 65 to get their pension, if Tory plans succeed.

Nearly 1.2 million men between 55 and 65 no longer work,

over 40 per cent of the age group. Nearly half of women over 55 have retired and would have to wait for up to 10 years to get any pension.

Many in these age groups are out of work because after being made redundant they find it almost impossible to get a job.

The government justifies its move on the grounds of European Union directives that the pension ages should be the same for men and women.

But the directives do not say that they should be equalised at 65 — this is the government's choice.

May Day march: 'Fighting for workers' rights'
Monday 1 May, 12noon
Highbury Fields, London N1
Highbury & Islington tube

**Defend Clause Four!
Defend socialism!**
Lobby of Labour Party special conference
Saturday 29 April, 10.30am
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London SW1
Westminster tube

Lessons of the Scottish wipe-out

THE Scottish local council elections are the latest measure of the deep unpopularity of the Tory government, not just among workers but also sections of the middle class.

Despite drawing new council boundaries to give themselves the best possible chance, the Tories failed to win a single council in Scotland. They won only 82 council seats out of a total of 1,161, to Labour's 613 seats and the Scottish Nationalists with 179. The Tories were beaten into fourth place by the Liberals who took 123 seats.

The Tories took their worst beating in Scotland in living memory.

But they are doing only slightly better in England where they now control only one metropolitan authority — Trafford in Greater Manchester. In the 1994 elections the Conservatives failed to win a single seat in 13 of the 36 metropolitan districts and have only a fifth of all seats in such areas.

But support for the Tory party is also slipping fast in rural areas. Last year they lost control of formerly solid true-blue areas such as Winchester, Woking and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Many middle-class people are frightened by the threat of unemployment, by debts incurred in house purchases during the property boom, and by the destruction of the NHS and the social services.

What is the reaction of the Labour leaders to this show of deep hostility to the Tories?

They move further to the right at an increasing rate of knots.

■ Rather than launching a campaign against the Tories, Blair turns his fire on Clause Four.

■ Only last week Blair went out of his way to pledge that any tax hand-outs the Tories might make to the rich as a pre-election bribe would be left intact by a future Labour government.

* * * * *

No wonder Blair is attracting some of the most reactionary forces in the country.

■ He is praised to the skies by arch-Thatcherites as a good Christian who has renounced class politics and understands the need for further cuts in public spending.

■ Blair was warmly received at his recent 'Spectator' lecture, where his main theme was the need to recognise that the citizen had important 'duties'. He was understandably hailed as a convert to Thatcherism.

■ He is welcomed by 'The Times' (owner Rupert Murdoch) as a man the City can do business with.

Here are clear indications that large sections of big business and the City have lost confidence in the Tories. They see a crisis-ridden government, up to its neck in corruption and scandal and deeply divided on Europe.

Blair sets out to reassure them that their interests will be completely safe in his hands. He justifies his continuing swing to the right on the ground that this is the only way that Labour can be elected.

First, what, in any case, is the point of Labour winning an election on policies indistinguishable from those of the Tories?

Second, history establishes that as Labour moves to the right it is less and less able to win the support of either the working class or the middle class.

Under Kinnock's right-wing leadership, three elections in a row were lost. The only way that the middle class can be won to the side of the working class is through the struggle for a socialist programme. Blair, Prescott and company have made clear that even in words they have no intention of fighting for such a programme.

If the middle class is not won by the working class, the danger is that, out of despair, it will rally to right-wing, reactionary forces. Lord Tebbit's anti-European nationalism, his warnings of the danger of 'civil war' in this country, is an early warning of the shape of things to come.

Letters

People who liked Clause Four

BECAUSE of an editing error in last week's 'Inside left' column, there was reference to an opinion poll finding that a majority 'of Labour members' supported Tony Blair's campaign to reform the Party constitution; but that they agreed with the existing Clause Four when they read it.

In fact, the poll earlier this year was not of Labour Party members, who presumably will have seen the Clause before on their membership cards, but more significantly, of ordinary members of the public, who when hearing the clause — about securing for the workers the 'full fruits of their labour' etc., evidently thought it a good idea!

So much for the pretence by Blair and his fans in the media that his object in removing Labour's commitment to common ownership is to make the party more 'electable'.

Charlie Pottins
London SW2

Are young workers dupes?

TOM OWEN makes the point in his article on 'popular culture' (25 March) that it is simply part of bourgeois culture, which seems uncontroversial, but he goes on to claim that it inevitably traps youth in a 'spectacle of their own alienation'.

This strikes me as very pessimistic. Young workers are portrayed as passive dupes, presented with this awful spectacle by an efficient bourgeois entertainment machine.

I am not claiming by contrast that pop culture is inherently revolutionary. But Tom's description of it as a 'feast that voyeuristically celebrates the dehumanisation' of the working class is mind-boggling in its fatalism. This echoed by the title of his piece: 'Do young workers celebrate their own brutalisation?' No doubt they do to some extent, but this is surely a one-sided summing up of their cultural activity! I think the word 'contradictory' should come in somewhere in this discussion!

For example, young people not only listen to pop and rock, they also learn to play instruments, they play in bands, they go to concerts, dance clubs, and so on. There is a tremendous energy here, and a yearning for self-expression, creativity and authenticity. I know they are not Marxists, but neither are they simply dupes of bourgeois propaganda.

Of course, capitalism avidly seizes on pop music and commercialises it, but does that negate young people's input into it, and the meanings they extract from it? Let me be personal: to my taste, 'grunge' rock is an extraordinarily rich and complex genre within contemporary music, and gives me great pleasure and also inspiration.

I agree that some on the left have romanticised and idealised popular culture, and see it as 'counter-hegemonic' and so on; but I feel that Tom has gone to the other extreme, and sees it purely as anaesthetic fodder for the masses, bewitching them with images of their imprisonment.

I am puzzled by Tom's references to 'high culture', which he claims, not only maintains (bourgeois) class interest, but also 'profoundly subverts' it. We seem to have arrived back at the great cultural divide of F.R. Leavis. There is high culture which can be subversive; and there is something else ('low' culture?), which Tom seems to imply cannot be subversive, but traps young workers in their own alienation.

What worries me here is that the old division between 'high' and 'low' culture is being refurbished in Marxist clothes. Somehow, high culture is 'better', more 'profound', more 'tragic', more 'subversive' or whatever. I disagree. For me, rock music is one of the key art forms of this century. Or is Marxism going to say that in the period of imperialist decay, authentic artistic expression is an impossibility?

Roger Horrocks
London W14

Power of ideology

I WONDER what readers of Workers Press made of its editor's view — in editorial aside to my letter (25 March) — that my correspondence has been 'extensive' and that it has not carried out my theoretical 'programme'.

Be that as it may, it might perhaps not be in the WRP's interest to simply dismiss contributions that indicate a perspective and strategy different to its own.

Can the difference in our understanding be bridged? Consider this quotation from page 265 of Istvan Meszaros's 'The Power of Ideology':

'[T]he question of political/organisational forms can only constitute a specific part that in its turn must be always assessed in terms of the dynamically unfolding transformations of the production system of global capital itself.'

The key here is whether we consider these 'dynamically unfolding transformations' as purely a political-economy matter — a question of understand-

ing the purely objective development of capitalism — or whether Meszaros's words can be interpreted to include the unfolding of political and ideological trends in society, including within Trotskyism.

If you take the first interpretation only, then you condemn yourselves to perpetually following developments rather than having a chance of leading them.

Jane Williams
London N4

Dockers and working class

IT APPEARS to me that Keith Sinclair's argument (1 April) that Healy and Co. did not plan and apply the tactic of leaving the Transport and General Workers' Union (the White Union) and joining the National Amalgamated Stevedores' and Dockers' Union (the Blue Union) rests upon Hull dockers agreeing to join the Blue on Wednesday 18 August 1954, four days before their Sunday mass meeting where Healy-influenced Birkenhead leaders spoke in favour of joining the Blues.

Therefore we would conclude, Hull responded not to political manoeuvring but to a spontaneous reaction against working conditions and the docility of the White officials in doing anything to remedy their complaints.

What evidence is there for this theory apart from the headline in the 'Hull Daily Mail' of Wednesday 18 August that 'Dockers break away from Union'? Note that it merely refers to dockers leaving a union.

Even if it does mean a break to the Blues, where and when was the decision made by the Hull dockers? A mass meeting? Committee meeting? According to Bill Hunter's version, the Birkenhead committee visited Hull with the express intention of persuading them to join the Blues. So even if Hull did decide to join before the Sunday meeting, Healy and Co. had the intention of getting them to break from the White union.

It would be interesting to know from what source the 'Hull Daily Mail' got its story, which appeared to smooth the way for the Birkenhead delegation, and what the article behind the headline actually said.

Nowhere have I said that the idea for the break came from Healy — it was also raised in 1949-50 in the Socialist Workers League.

A bureaucratic manoeuvre on Healy's part (due to entryism) does not by any stretch of the imagination mean that thousands of dockers who agreed with the policy were part of that manoeuvre.

I'm all in favour of struggling within the trade unions for democracy, etc., and was always active myself in trade

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union affairs at branch and job level.

However, I do not consider that the trade unions can be transformed into class combat organisations that are necessary in the struggle for day-to-day needs and the long-term struggle for socialist revolution.

That is why I consider the break to the Blues to have been a mistake, the history of which we must learn from in order to avoid future mistakes, particularly as now we have anti-trade union laws to contend with.

I consider that at all times as socialists we must give a lead to our class, and not succumb to opportunist manoeuvres of spontaneity. We must endeavour to build class forms of organisation; to unite the various and diverse activities of the workers, within one mass organisation of which the trade unions would be a constituent part, and within which all working class political tendencies would have the freedom to put forward their ideas for struggle.

Tom Cowan
London SE2

Left dissent slandered!

ON SATURDAY evening, April, the Vremya television news programme — broadcast throughout Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine — ran an outrageous and slanderous piece charging that supporters of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) in Russia were actively organising to 'overthrow' the government of the Ukraine.

The ICL immediately issued a press release and emergency protest demonstrations are being held in cities including New York, Chicago, Berlin, Toronto, Melbourne and London.

We urge everyone to protest against this outrageous attempt to criminalise leftist dissent. Send protest letters to the Ukrainian embassy and the Vremya programme which carried the broadcast slandering the ICL(FI).

Spartacist League
London

■ Ukrainian embassy fax: 0171-792 1708. Vremya, Ostankino TV, Moscow fax: +709 217-7975. Spartacist League fax: 0171-267 3867.

Correction

THERE was an error in the front-page story, 'Nightmarish journey for Workers Aid member', in last week's Workers Press. This referred to a 'Bosnian checkpoint at Armija'. In fact, 'Armija' is not a place but means 'army'. So the text should have read 'Bosnia-Herzegovina army checkpoint'. This is on the east side of Mostar.

Coming soon

SATURDAY 29 APRIL: 'International evening for May Day', 6.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Nearest tube Holborn. Music, dance and food from around the world. Entrance £2, £1 concessions.

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

MONDAY 1 MAY: May Day march. 'Fighting for workers' rights'. Assembles 12noon, Highbury Fields, London N1. Tube Highbury & Islington. Rally Clissold Park. Speakers include National Union of Mineworkers' president Arthur Scargill.

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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Gain before safety

BY PETER GIBSON

THE government's aim to deregulate the transport industry, and to ease controls on employers, has resulted in a proposal to cut the budget of the Department of Transport and to privatise many of the monitoring bodies.

There were 334,869 people injured in the transport sector last year. One of the Department of Transport's responsibilities is the body which checks on the safety of vehicles. In 1992-93 the inspectorate found 34 per cent of the vehicles it checked (15,814) had defective brakes.

Another 4,982 had defective tyres, 2,195 had defective wheels, 2,864 had oil leaks which left oil patches on the road endangering other road users, and 1,669 had defective steering.

The DoT's answer to the problem is to cut the workforce at the Vehicle Inspectorate by 500.

The Vehicle Registration office is to close, with the loss of 1,500 jobs, and the Vehicle Licensing Agency is to cut a further 700 jobs.

Accidents

The increase in the danger of accidents, injury and death as a result of the drive for profit was highlighted in last week's Workers Press report of the summons issued to the manager of a bus company for 'conspiracy to cause drivers to falsify records' following a number of deaths in a coach crash on the M2 motorway.

The figures for defects found on Heavy Goods Vehicles and Public Service Vehicles — buses and coaches — in 1992-93 expose

the extent of the danger on the roads to all of us.

While the trade unions in the industry are calling for more 'positive agendas' for safety, the Labour leadership will not agree to reinstate public ownership and control of the road freight and bus industries.

The impact of the debate on

Clause Four has not been missed on those working in the transport industries where the drive for more profit means less regulation, fewer safety checks, and more unfit vehicles on the road.

When profit comes first, safety doesn't come second, but way further down on the list.



Buses for profit, not service

BY ROY THOMAS

WHEN the bus service was deregulated in 1986 the government's justification was it would mean a better service by breaking up the London and national bus monopolies. The publicly owned organisations were broken up into separate units and companies with about 400-600 buses each.

The real objective, of course, was to allow private companies to move into the industry and make big profits, and to do that there had to be much bigger organisations. So by 1995, 60 per cent of the bus services in Britain were owned by the major monopolies, 20 per cent were management-owned, and just over 2 per cent owned by employees, with only 8 per cent owned by municipal and local councils.

In spite of the claim that deregulation would mean better services for passengers, the number of people using buses has fallen by 24 per cent across the country, with decreases of

40-50 per cent in some major towns because of fare increases and cuts in services in the interest of profit.

In place of the old system of replacing buses on a steady programme, old buses are now kept in use even though many have become unfit. The average age of buses now in use is quoted in the press as 12 years, with 30-year-old buses not uncommon.

The major monopoly is Stagecoach, with 12 per cent of the total market in Britain and extensive operations in Africa, the Far East and Canada. In Britain Stagecoach owns 17 companies and runs 5,000 buses.

Deal

It has done a deal in the last two years to acquire companies, or take shares in others. It has also been the subject of a number of Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiries.

National Express, which runs many long-distance services, has now taken over West Midland Travel, which had dominated the major services

around the Birmingham area.

Now BadgerLine, whose shares had been falling on the Stock Exchange as a result of the strike of 105 drivers in Chelmsford, has been forced to merge with GRT, a major bus company in the north of England and in London.

This new company will be called FirstBus, and will be running 5,600 buses. It represents a further move towards all services being run by four or five major monopolies — paying lower wages, carrying fewer passengers, but making a very nice profit.

Henry McLeish, one of Labour's shadow spokespersons on transport, is quite clear what Labour will do.

'We are not seeking to return bus services to public ownership, or local authority control', he said, 'but we need regulation and we want to speak to the main companies and trade unions and authorities and focus on the excess of bus bunching.'

So there you have it. Labour will seek to deal with bus bunching — not outrageous fare levels, not out-of-date, unfit

buses, not the cuts in bus services. There are very few better examples of the need for public ownership and control of industry and services than Britain's deregulated and privatised bus services.

Safety

Those who want or need to use buses have fewer chances to use them. Where they can use them, the fares are high and it's often cheaper to use a car. The safety level of the vehicles has fallen and, because of their lower wages and longer hours worked, the health of drivers and their care for their and your safety are worse.

When London Transport was set up in 1933 and all the private companies running bus, tram and trolley bus services were taken over, the then National government said that that would provide a more co-ordinated service and do away with wasteful competition.

The only people to believe in this now are the bus workers and the passengers — clearly not the Labour leaders.

Aitken: putting on the Ritz — and some!

BY PAUL DAY

JONATHAN AITKEN, chief secretary to the Treasury, is back in the news, this time for allegedly attempting to procure girls for his Saudi business associates.

A 'World in Action' documentary, which three times offered Aitken the opportunity to be its chief interviewed subject, alleges that Aitken tried to procure the women for a visit to a Berkshire health farm, but failed.

At first reading this story is incomprehensible. Where is the story in a Tory minister being too incompetent even to organise some company of the opposite sex?

In the wake of numerous other sex scandals too absurd to repeat here, the media line seems to be that this government is morally bankrupt, and its members keen to trampoline from it onto the nearest available bed.

That is certainly true, but it is only half the story. In the case of Richard Spring, a nonentity of a backbench yep-man, a three-in-a-bed sex romp is not only the most interesting thing ever heard about him, it is also the only thing ever heard about him.

But in the case of Aitken his bungled attempts to provide 'entertainment' are merely the tip of the iceberg. The documentary shows that Aitken attempted to conceal his connections with Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, son of the Saudi king, from his constituents, for example disguising his frequent trips to the Middle East as trips to America.

Yet when pressed on his Saudi business links he issued a

press statement which said he believed that they were 'good for British exports, good for British investment, and that they were honourable. Furthermore he is proud of them.' Just not proud enough of them to reveal them openly, apparently.

The problem becomes clearer when we examine Aitken's line of business. He has worked for the arms company BMARC. His last run-in with the media had come over the question of whether or not he knew the company was trading with Iraq and Iran.

It has now been revealed that Aitken also served on the board of FMS, a company which acted as a link in providing security systems and weapons to the Lebanese government. This had not been declared on the returns of other companies whose boards he graced.

Holiday

Further information has also come to light about Aitken's stay at the Paris Ritz in September 1993, which first brought him mass media attention. He claimed at the time that this was a family holiday, and a mistake had arisen over the bill because the room had initially been booked by his business partner Said Ayas.

It now transpires that also present at the Ritz, along with Messrs Aitken and Ayas, were various other business associates of the Saudi royal family and investors in Aitken's finance house. All of them now deny that they met any of their long-term business partners at the hotel.

In the tangled web of all these stories only one thing is clear — the reluctance of the Tories that anybody should find out what they are up to.

Tomlinson discredited on London health service

HEALTH SECRETARY Virginia Bottomley is under pressure from her own backbenchers and the government's policy is clearly one of privatisation and smash and grab.

The 1992 Tomlinson Report on London's health service — which said that London had too many beds and received an excessive share of funds — is now discredited. Tomlinson also reckoned that giving extra cash to GP services would make it possible to close thousands of hospital beds across the capital.

A leaflet from London Health Emergency highlights some of the crisis facing the NHS.

Inner London health authorities have said that most hospitals are running 'under pressure' and that more than 90 per cent of acute beds are occupied. They call for a halt to more hospital, ward and bed closures.

The Tory government's own figures show that Londoners get less NHS cash per head than people in other big cities.

Leading academics from the King's Fund, whose report laid the groundwork for Tomlinson, are now admitting they got it wrong and that GP services can't replace hospital services. They warn that London's hospitals need more cash and more beds.

But Bottomley and her

'health' department cohorts are determined to press forward in their campaign to destroy the free NHS — not just in inner London but also in outer London.

London has continued to lose 1,000 acute beds a year and waiting lists have increased.

But there have been some holding off of the attack. Guy's hospital has been reprieved until 1999, though some departments face possible closure next year. Campaigns at Central Middlesex and Chase Farm have resulted in the dropping of closure plans.

Other battles hang in the balance — such as Edgware.

In the context of Tory general election nerves, campaigns can make progress. There is to be a London-wide meeting for NHS campaigners on 4 May, called by London Health Emergency, Edgware 'Hands Off Our Hospitals' campaign and SICK (Save It, Casualty in Crisis, Guy's).

'Link up and win!', London-wide meeting for NHS campaigners, Thursday 4 May, 7pm, council chamber, Kensington town hall, Horton Street, London W8. Nearest tube High Street Kensington.

London Health Emergency can be contacted on 0181-960 8002.

Immigration service imprisons children

AT LEAST 18 refugee children who arrived in Britain between January and September 1994 were placed in immigration service detention centres and prisons, for periods of up to six months.

Aged between 15 and 17, they were among the 264 unaccompanied children who arrived in Britain seeking asylum from persecution. These children came from places such as former Yugoslavia, the Horn of Africa, China and Afghanistan.

Children flee from gross violations of human rights ranging from forced prostitution and conscription (in some countries beginning under ten) to torture. They arrive physically exhausted, confused, and traumatised by the events they have witnessed.

One example is Danny who fled to Britain from conscription into the army ravaging his southern African country. He was 16 years old, alone, penniless and unable to speak English. He was held in detention for over four months. As with many refugee children in detention, the Home Office claimed that he was 18. Only after an independent paediatrician had examined him was he released on bail.

'All those months I thought about my family and home nearly every day,' said Danny. 'To this day they have no idea what has happened to me. Ev-

erything was so strange here, the food was horrible and I was so cold. Now I have been released I am just really happy and starting to feel safe.'

Emma, 17 years old, fled her West African country after security troops assaulted her in her home. Her father, an active member of an opposition movement, had already disappeared. The assault left her scarred for life.

On her arrival in Britain Emma was incarcerated for over three months. She became seriously ill and was admitted to hospital for a major operation. While she was recovering, two security guards stood guard outside her room. She has now been released and is beginning to rebuild her life.

These cases stand in stark contrast to the statement of the immigration minister in December 1992, who claimed: 'Unaccompanied children are only ever detained by the immigration service if they arrive out of working hours and it is impossible to contact immediately the local social services until the following morning. In such cases they are given accommodation and looked after for the time. The protection of children is paramount in such arrangements.'

For further information contact 'Children in Detention', Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW 15J. Tel: 0171-582 6922.

What's going on at the T&G?

AT LAST WEEK'S meeting of the Transport and General Workers' Union executive, general secretary Bill Morris dropped a bombshell!

He announced that elections for his job as general secretary would take place in June 1995, the result to be declared on 23 June.

The election had to take place before May 1996, but by springing the election now, Morris will face this year's T&G conference in July with the election over.

Morris fears a very critical reception at the conference, and

an attempt to wrongfoot both the left- and the right-wing has caused him to wrongfoot everyone.

Both wings of the union had been discussing who to run against Morris in 1996 — but neither had reached a decision. Jack Dromey, the public service national secretary, and Len McCluskey, the general works national secretary are possible right and left candidates.

The T&G executive last week rejected — by 18 votes to nine — the proposal from Morris and Dan Duffey (the executive chair) to embrace the new

Clause Four and support Blair. So even if Morris is re-elected, which seems very likely, the rank-and-file executive and the T&G conference could well be a block to any attempt to move the union further to the right.

The elections soon to take place in the South East and Midlands regions to replace executive members who have died may well set the pattern for the elections for all the executive positions at the end of the year.

Even inside Transport House there are indications of discontent. Joe Irvin, director for research and education, and one

of Bill Morris's main speech writers, has recently returned to work for the Society for the Protection of Birds.

At the last meeting of the executive John Fisher of the University of Surrey was appointed to take over trade union education at Transport House. Fisher has the reputation of being his own man, so Bill Morris may have even more problems there.

All those T&G members who read Workers Press must make sure they play a part in the union's life in the coming months.

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Inside left

Relevant revolutionaries

IN DEFENCE of the Russian Revolution', a selection of previously unavailable writings by leading Bolsheviks, is the first book put out by new publishers Porcupine Press.

Last week's Workers Press published a letter from the former Soviet Union calling for opposition to the crimes of the Yeltsin regime in Chechnya. With this in mind, I was interested to read in the new book Leon Trotsky's 'On the national question' in 1923.

Stressing that a correct approach to the national question was essential to maintaining working-class rule, Trotsky warned against 'lazy indifference' to the demands of oppressed nationalities covered up with general phrases about internationalism'.

Trotsky referred to 'some reports by a certain Tsarist general in the service of the Soviet power about how the Georgians were fighting chauvinists, how little they understood Moscow's internationalism, and what a lot of Red regiments were needed to counteract Georgian, Azerbaijani and every other sort of Transcaucasian nationalism'. He commented: '[I]n the case of this general, the old-line forceful great power attitude was barely disguised under the new terminology.'

A young comrade suggested that while it was correct for Russian communists to fight Great Russian chauvinism, the Ukrainian and other communists had the duty to fight their own nationalists. Trotsky said the revolutionary slogan in World War I, that 'the main enemy is your own country', had meant revolutionary struggle by the proletarian vanguard against its own imperialist bourgeoisie, its own militarist state. But this principle shouldn't simply be transferred to parts of the USSR, he explained.

'[T]hose best fitted to combat Georgian nationalism are the Georgian communists. But this is a question of tact, not of principle. The root of the matter is the need early to grasp the historic origins of the great power aggressive nationalism of the Great Russians and of the defensive nationalism of the small peoples. It is necessary to appreciate the true proportions between these historic factors . . .'

Communists must have a uniform conception, Trotsky insisted, and this 'must consist in a non-uniform attitude to Great Russian and to Muslim nationalism: in relation to the former, ruthless struggle, stern rebuff, especially in those cases when it is displayed in the administrative and governmental sphere; in relation to the latter — patient, attentive, painstaking educational work'.

If this piece by Trotsky is anything to go by, 'In Defence of the Russian Revolution' has more than just historical relevance. Despite the experience of Stalinism, chauvinist attitudes masked behind 'internationalist' phrases still have to be fought in the left today.

Turncoat MP

'Weekly Worker' (30 March), liner Dave Douglass says Sidney and Beatrice Webb did not invent the words of Clause Four. 'They came more or less directly from the constitution of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.' Douglass says Kevin Hughes, who left the Communist Party for the 'hardline' Stalinist New Communist Party, and is now sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as Labour MP for Doncaster North, 'has rejected NUM policy to stand by Clause Four and crown his weight in with the Blair pippies' Tory political vision'.

Workers should foreclose on the turncoat MP's career.

Charlie Pottins

GRASPING THE

GEOFF PILLING assesses the significance for today of Friedrich Engels's 'Condition of the Working Classes in England', which was published 150 years ago, and its place in the development of Marxism

THIS year is the 100th anniversary of the death of Friedrich Engels, whose the 'Condition of the Working Classes in England', the text for which he is above all remembered, is one of the founding documents of the materialist conception of history.

Marx came to materialism and communism principally through his critique of classical German philosophy and the analysis of the political and economic conditions of what was then a backward Germany. But Engels, who from 1842 lived mostly in Britain, was able to make a study of the most developed capitalist country of that time and moved towards socialism under the influence of Chartism and Robert Owen's utopian socialism.

The 'Condition of the Working Classes in England' was written in 1844, when Engels was 24 and working in his father's textile firm in Manchester, although it was first published a year later.

The book reveals, some 20 years before the appearance of Marx's 'Capital', that splendid blend of detailed empirical study and theoretical clarity that was to become the hallmark of classical Marxism, long before the epigones turned Marxism into arid concepts and authoritarian political dogma and practice.

This alone would be reason enough to study the work today, particularly as the social sciences continually present us with a choice between mindless empiricism and vacuous theoretical formalism. But, more than this, the 'Condition of the Working Classes' is more in tune with our times than texts on the 'social structure of advanced industrial society' that were written a mere 20 years ago and are now gathering dust on library shelves.

We are living through a period of fundamental social and political upheaval and it is during such times that the past suddenly becomes nearer and more relevant. It has become a commonplace that the material conditions of life for growing numbers of people in Britain — the young, the homeless,

and women in particular — are beginning to move in the direction of those described in Engels's Manchester of 1844.

Just as Engels knew that the processes he was describing in that city 150 years ago were of world significance, so today poverty is a major global problem.

The United Nations World Economic Survey for 1993 revealed that one in five of the world's population lives in poverty (defined as an income below \$275 per year). After decades of 'development plans', 'aid programmes' and the like, poverty is growing rapidly in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

But it is also sharply increasing in the advanced capitalist countries. In North America and western Europe, on average one person in six now lives below the poverty line.

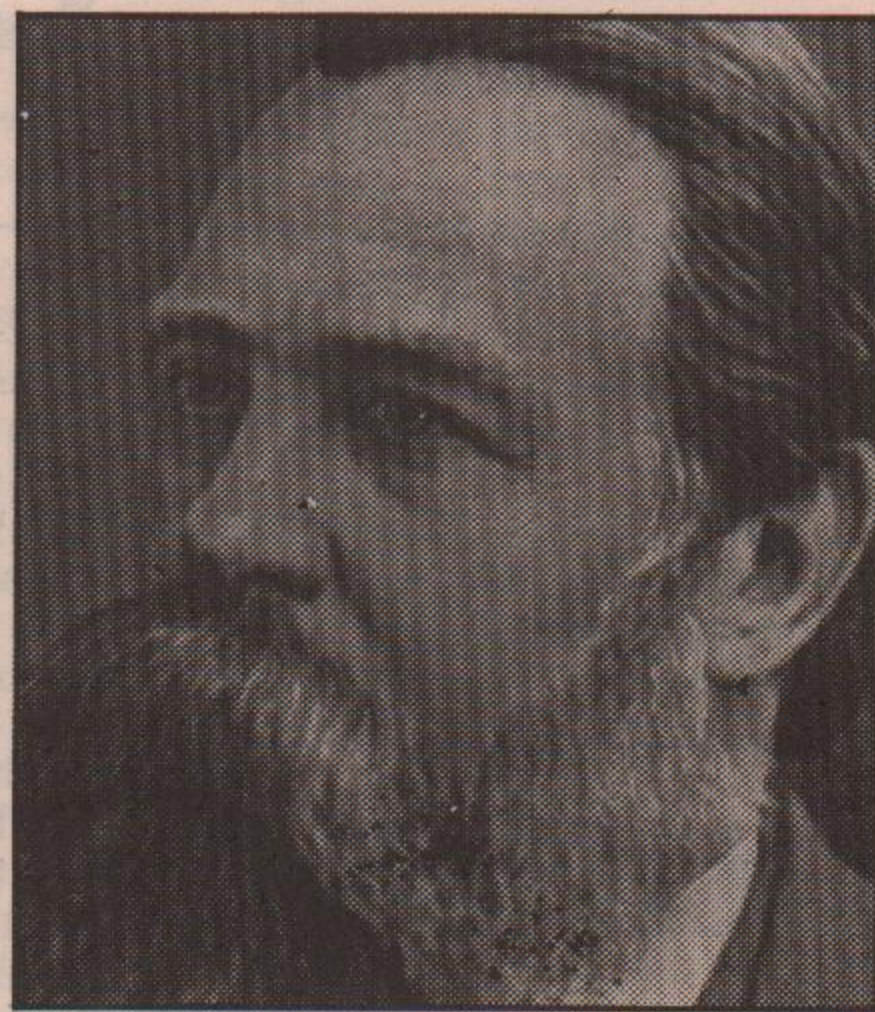
Poverty grows with unemployment; but today unemployment, no longer simply produced by the trade cycle — the results of which were vividly described in Engels's book — is increasingly of a structural and long-term character.

Today, more and more the unemployed are no longer part of a 'reserve army', awaiting an upturn in the trade cycle to be drawn back into the labour force: they are now permanently unemployed, with no prospect or hope of work.

Poverty and inequality

IN THE growing debate on poverty and inequality in Britain, Engels's work has moved firmly back onto the agenda, not only from the standpoint of actual living conditions but as an important rebuff to the right-wing's attempt to blame the poor for their own predicament. The return to Lady Thatcher's 'Victorian values' means a return to Blake's 'dark satanic mills' — though with most of the mills now closed.

Engels's work directly addressed issues such as growing poverty and the necessity for fundamental social change. These now confront working people in Britain and



Friedrich Engels

throughout the world — and they do so as their traditional party for the last 90 years and more, the Labour Party, makes crystal clear that it has renounced any idea of such change.

Engels was able to draw the conclusions that he did because the development of British capitalism was archetypal for capitalism as a whole, and not some local peculiarity. Manchester in 1844 was not simply a city in northern England. In 1844 it represented the highest point of the development of the capitalist mode of production,

'The "globalisation" of capital is undermining the ability of the British ruling class to pursue an independent economic or political strategy on the world arena.'

graphically anticipating the dynamics and contradictions of its development.

Likewise 'the decline of Britain' is not today a local peculiarity expressing some idiosyncratic 'backwardness' derived from the lack of a thorough-going bourgeois revolution, or the untoward dominance of financial over industrial capital, as certain radicals suggest.

The decline of the British economy holds up a mirror to the rest of the capitalist world, as surely as did capitalist Britain in the middle of the last century. In so far as Britain is dominated by a handful of bankers, money-dealers and sundry other types of speculator, it reflects, in concentrated form, conditions in the world as a whole.

Engels wrote his classic study at a time when Britain had assumed world dominance, controlling an empire 'on which the sun never set and wages rarely rose'. Following Britain's lead, the rest of the world began the process of capitalist industrialisation, a process usually financed with British money. In short, it was Britain, with Manchester at its centre, that brought the world market into being.

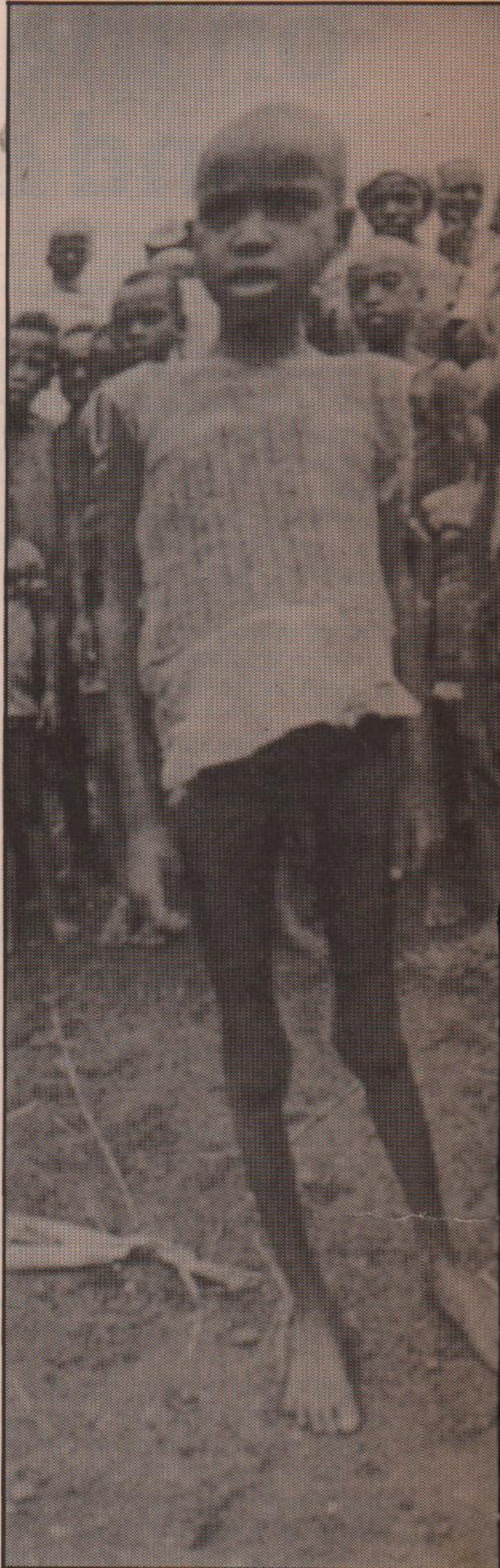
But today it is the contradictions of the world market that are threatening to turn what has been a long period of relative decline for British capital into an absolute one. In short, what is now fashionably called the 'globalisation' of capital is undermining the ability of the British ruling class to

pursue an independent economic or political strategy on the world arena. Here, to take one example, lies the source of the deep divisions in the British establishment about its orientation towards Europe.

Engels wrote about poverty in the 'Condition of the Working Classes' in a way that is central to the nature of the materialist conception of history.

He was not documenting the consequences of the Industrial Revolution — factory production and urban living — but analysing the contradictory social relations of capitalism: the formation of the working class as the essence of the productive forces of capitalism and, at the same time, the potential agent of capitalism's destruction.

Debates among economic historians as to precisely when, or indeed whether, the Industrial



Capitalism today uses the most modern

Revolution took place are generally characterised by a one-sided empiricism mesmerised by the issue of technology.

Engels saw the Industrial Revolution as a social process that had at its core the creation of a quite new phenomenon, the modern industrial working class. For him it was a profoundly contradictory turning-point in world history, which was imposing misery and degradation on the working class but, by virtue of the very creation of such a class, laying the basis for a newer, truly human form of society.

Those economic historians deserve criticism who, having reduced the Industrial Revolution largely to technology, thereby claim that it is not a distinguishable, qualitative, historical event.

By implication such a critique

THE CRISIS,

OR THE CHANGE FROM ERROR AND MISERY, TO TRUTH AND HAPPINESS

1832.

IF WE CANNOT YET
LET US ENDEAVOUR

RECONCILE ALL OPINIONS,
TO UNITE ALL HEARTS.

IT IS OF ALL TRUTHS THE MOST IMPORTANT, THAT THE CHARACTER OF MAN IS FORMED FOR—NOT BY HIMSELF.

Design of a Community of 2,000 Persons, founded upon a principle, commended by Plato, Lord Bacon, Sir T. More, & R. Owen.

EDITED BY
ROBERT OWEN AND ROBERT DALE OWEN.

Utopian socialist Robert Owen influenced the young Engels

THE REAL FUTURE

extends to those theorists — a few former Marxists included — who have in recent years announced a fundamentally new stage in the development of capitalism brought about, for example, by information technology, which magically overcomes the fundamental antagonisms between capital and labour intrinsic to the social relations of capitalism.

Engels cannot be read as simply documenting the condition of the working class as merely the sufferer of poverty, real though these things were (and increasingly are). Even the existence of poverty and destitution has to be understood dialectically.

In early capitalism the accumulation of capital depended on low wages and the maximisation of the working day, that is it mainly extracted surplus value in its absolute

ance on the positivist method's search for criminogenic character defects, which is still peddled today by conservative criminology — but also, paradoxically, as the starting-point of resistance to capitalism.

Out of the rage and destructive individual violence of crime — from the machine-smashing mobs of the early 19th century onwards — came the development of working-class political consciousness, reaching its high-point in the Chartist movement of the 1840s.

Here again, for Engels, the emergence of Chartism had implications that extended far beyond these shores: for 'Britain gave the world Chartism, the first broad, truly mass and politically organised proletarian revolutionary movement'.

But if such issues as poverty and criminality have to be seen in the

development of class-consciousness is different from crime as a result of the decay left by a capitalism no longer capable of developing society, only of tearing it apart.

Capitalism no longer develops society or the working class. But the working class does not need to go through all the stages of political development and repeat the processes documented by Engels.

The working class internationally has the capacity to act to stop the destruction being wrought by global capitalism. And the conditions for it doing so are becoming more favourable.

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes of the USSR and eastern Europe were heralded as the 'victory of capitalism'. Now, however, it is dawning on the representatives of the ruling class that not only is capitalism unable to effect a

working class not as a series of individuals, but as a force, a movement, brought into being by the development of capital itself.

Here lay Engels's decisive advance. Even the most trenchant critics of the bourgeois order, such as Thomas Carlyle, had failed to understand the nature of the working class. They failed to grasp the significance of the struggles in which it was engaged, or to comprehend the nature of the consciousness that was developing within it. They failed to understand this newly-emerging working class as the real 'critic' of capitalism.

Like Marx, Engels was remarkable for the extent to which he saw beyond his time. The condition of the working class was a question exercising the minds of many writers and critics: Charles Dickens in 'Hard Times' (1854), Elizabeth Gas-

established. It was in 'The Holy Family' that Marx and Engels settled accounts with the 'critical critics' who had condemned the working class as an 'uncritical mass'.

So Engels saw the poverty, misery and starvation that surrounded him, on his tours of the northern English towns, through eyes that were already theoretically well-educated. And yet there is no doubt that his experiences in Manchester had a profound impact on him, marking a decisive step in his development towards revolutionary socialism. ('It was not until he came to England that Engels became a socialist,' claimed Lenin.)

He arrived at his conclusions about the historical character of the working class not on the basis of searching for the features common to the working-class movement in each country — a de-



technology to further global poverty: famine victims in Ethiopia (left); and hungry people queuing in Chile

form. Here again, we can say that the situation Engels described is now returning: the strategy of the government for the last decade and a half has been — largely by breaking up the trade unions — to erode working conditions on hours and safety at work.

Engels graphically portrayed the brutalisation of the working class. But, as he was among the first to realise, the accumulation of capital is the motive force creating the conditions in which the working class can develop organisation and the strength to resist and, eventually, replace capitalism with a more just society.

Engels, therefore, saw working-class crime not simply as the result of the demoralisation and brutalisation of the working class by capitalism — though even this would have represented an adv-

context of the growth of the working class in opposition to capital, in the present epoch the 'same' phenomena have to be looked at in the different context of capitalism's decline.

Poverty as the precursor of the further development of the productive forces of capitalism is one thing; poverty resulting from capitalism today using the most modern technology only to further the process of global impoverishment and destitution of countless millions, and the general destruction of humanity's productive forces is quite something else. (The world-wide threat to the environment posed by capitalism today transcends anything that Engels saw in Manchester and its surrounding filthy, smoke-polluted towns.)

Likewise, crime as a stage in the

smooth process of reclamation of the former 'Communist' countries, but the removal of the theoretical and political shackles of Stalinism liberates new forces to join in the political development of the international working class.

The consolidation and education of these new forces requires a major work of excavation. Engels must be recovered from the rubble of Stalinism, understood not simply as a brutal system of oppression of the working class but as a theoretical onslaught on Marxism that threatened to turn it into a barren mechanical determinism.

Yet the greatest damage inflicted by Stalinism was the blows it struck at working-class consciousness. In the fight for the recovery of such consciousness, Engels's book is of the greatest value, having at its centre a conception of the

kell in 'Mary Barton' (1848), Charles Kingsley in 'Alton Locke' (1850), etc. But none came near to Engels in their appreciation of the historic significance of what was happening in Manchester.

For Engels did not simply describe the poverty and squalor that he saw all around him. Nor did he merely draw some general conclusions from the facts he so vividly and movingly detailed. He was able to see into the future because of the theoretical conquests he had already made before he set foot in Manchester.

The Marxist critique of political economy, although not yet completed, was under way; already in 'The Holy Family', the first joint effort of Marx and Engels, which appeared before the 'Condition of the Working Classes', the revolutionary character of the working class is

veloped working-class movement then existed only in England — but by taking this one 'classic' or 'pure' instance in Manchester and uncovering its internal contradictions.

Like Marx, Engels was, by 1844, well down the road to, in the words of the 'Communist Manifesto', 'comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole', of grasping that it was with this newly-emerging working class that the real future of humanity lay.

Capitalism today threatens not simply the working class and the poor people of this planet; it calls into question the very future of the planet itself. Socialism or barbarism — the choice advanced by Rosa Luxemburg — is not something in prospect but for millions is a living reality far grimmer even than the conditions analysed by Engels 150 years ago.

Judicial torture

PERSONAL COLUMN

THIS column is about two acts of judicial torture. One extended over 12 years and culminated in an obscene last-minute game of cat and mouse before those final four seconds when they pushed 2,000 volts through the condemned man's body.

Nicholas Ingram had been brought up in a broken home, in circumstances as unfavourable, in a family as unloving, as could possibly be imagined.

His father was an alcoholic, and Ingram himself started drinking to excess at the age of 12 or 13. His British mother, who says she hardly knew him, left him with his father when she came back to Britain to remarry.

On his 18th birthday Ingram, after a trial during which powerful psychotropic drugs were administered to him, was sentenced to death for the brutal murder of a man whose house he had robbed for \$60 and a truck.

Then he waited for death on Death Row, mocked by the false dawns of one rejected appeal after another. For 11 years — more than a third of his entire life — he spent 21 hours a day in a cell nine feet long by six feet across.

The details of an execution by electric chair make grim reading.

The prisoner's head is shaved, and a copper electrode shaped like a skull-cap is fixed to his scalp and forehead over a sponge moistened with salt water.

If the sponge is too wet the saline short-circuits the electric current; if too dry it would have a very high resistance.

Other curved electrodes, moistened with conductive jelly, are bound to the prisoner's legs. The prisoner is strapped into the electric chair and blindfolded.

The prisoner's hands grip the chair and the limbs flail violently, often causing dislocations or fractures. The tissues swell and sometimes burst. The prisoner urinates and defecates. Usually steam or smoke rises, and there is a smell of burning.

That, or something very like it, was how Nicholas Ingram met his death in Georgia's maximum security prison — the 'Diagnostic and Classification Center', as it is officially known.

While Ingram was being tormented with two days of last-minute reprieves, each overturned, the host of an Atlanta radio show suggested that his listeners have a lottery on what day the execution would take place.

Vicki Gavalas, described by one British paper as the 'glamorous' spokeswoman for the Georgia Department of Corrections, kept the press fed with titbits of information.

A crowd of concerned Georgia citizens cheered the hearse when it arrived and stayed outside the prison — 'just to make sure that justice had been done' — until it left carrying the body.

'There was no smoke, no sizzling, no struggling at all', said one of the witnesses who had observed the execution through a window in the death chamber.

THE electric chair was first used in the US in 1890, allegedly because it killed people more quickly than did other methods of execution.

It is more likely however that, at a time of rising working-class discontent, and in the aftermath of the judicial murder of the 'Haymarket martyrs' (see 'Support May Day!', Workers Press, 8 April), the ruling class was anxious to put in place a supreme instrument of terror.

Its edge was turned above all against the working-class movement, and against African Americans who dared to organise and resist the abominations of lynch 'law'.

That indeed, in the Southern

states, was its primary purpose: to strike fear into the hearts of black people — as if lynchings alone were not a potent enough source of terror. In the last 16 years of the 19th century there were more than 2,500 lynchings in those states.

And it was Georgia that led the way in this reign of terror. In 1904, in the little town of Statesboro, two black men accused of murdering a white family were dragged out of the court-house and burned alive. No one was punished.

In 1906 white mobs went on the rampage in the Atlanta suburb of Brownsville, beating every black person they came across and slaughtering four. Again, no one was punished.

Just after World War I, Georgia was again in the forefront of anti-black rioting, and three black soldiers who had served in France were lynched in their uniforms.

As recently as 1964, during the debates over the Civil Rights Act, Ku Klux Klansmen picketed a desegregated hotel in Georgia, with posters that said: 'Don't trade here! Owners of this business surrendered to the race mixers.'

And in the same year a black man returning to his home from reserve officer training was killed in Georgia by a shotgun blast from a passing car; two Klansmen were tried for this crime and acquitted.

Georgia is a state whose entire history shows that it needs the electric chair as a fearsome warning of what the now rapidly growing 'underclass', reared in abject poverty and despair, can expect if they step out of line.

THERE is still time, though not a lot of time, to save from the electric chair another victim of judicial torture, Mumia Abu-Jamal, a political prisoner on Death Row in Pennsylvania.

An award-winning black journalist, Abu-Jamal was framed in 1982 on charges of killing a Philadelphia policeman. Denied the right to represent himself or have the lawyer of his choice, he was removed from the courtroom and missed most of the prosecution's case.

In a city where over 40 per cent of the population are black, only two black people were allowed on the jury.

While African Americans make up 12 per cent of the American population, they account for about 40 per cent of those awaiting execution throughout the US as a whole.

Over 80 per cent of the 170 people on Pennsylvania's Death Row are black — and one in three of those, including Mumia Abu-Jamal, were sent by Judge Albert Sabo, known as the 'King of Death Row', who has sentenced more people to death than any other sitting judge in the US.

Sabo is a member of the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police, which openly boasts of its campaign to have Abu-Jamal killed.

If Mumia Abu-Jamal is put to death after 13 years of legal torture, it would be the first openly political execution in the US since Julius and Ethel Rosenberg went to the electric chair in 1953.

It would be a monstrous victory for US reaction. We must not let it happen.

Letters of protest can be sent to Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge, Room 225, Harrisburg PA 17120, USA. Faxes should be sent to +1 717 783 1396.

And letters to Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Green, 1040 E. Roy Furman Hwy, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, PA 15370, USA.

Peter Fryer

Labour, the TUC and 'full employment'

Comment by Cliff Slaughter

TUC general secretary John Monks has called for 'reinstatement of full employment as a central policy objective' ('The Times', 4 April).

He knows that the present Tory government has policies which are directly opposed to that objective.

Yet Monks says: 'Only a new approach with a new policy direction from the government will resolve these dilemmas [unemployment, etc.] for all the British people.'

He ignores what is clear from the figures, which are given by Monks earlier in the same article, and from the whole weight of other evidence — that unemployment is more and more structural, not cyclical. This includes a growing component of people permanently unemployed. It is not just a question of 'policies' that guarantee full employment and at the same time don't challenge capitalism.

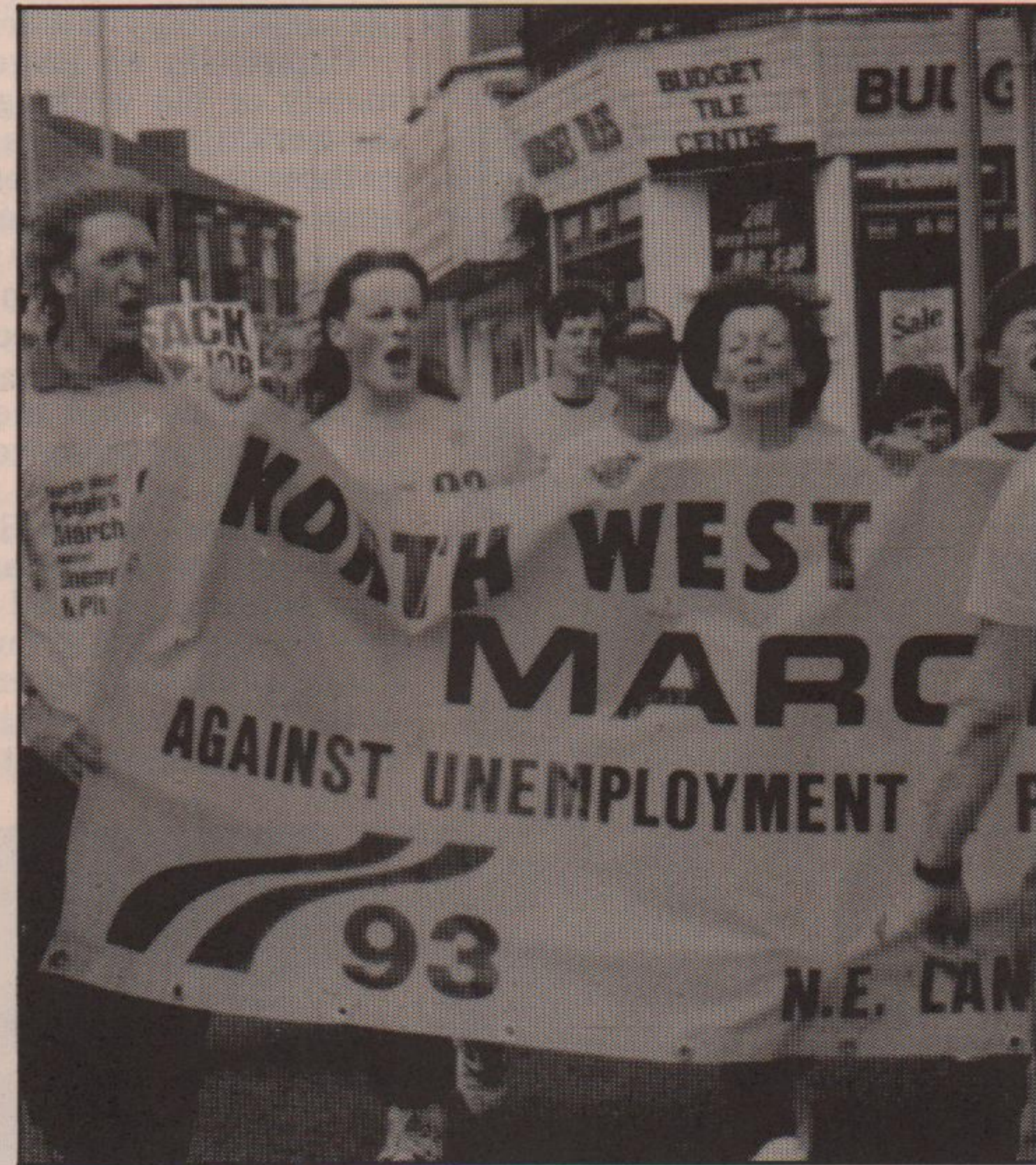
But Monks's solution is familiar: 'These objectives could be achieved by embracing "social partnership" between employers, their workforces, and government as a means of building a new consensus within the world of work, and creating a shared vision of the future.'

Banks

How these employers, such as the big banks, are to do this when in order to compete in the world market they are sacking tens of thousands, Monks doesn't explain.

This is not surprisingly, since, at the beginning of the same article, Monks points to 165,000 jobs lost in banking and the threat to as many in insurance companies and building societies.

'The big employers used to be the ones who provided secure, and often pensionable, employment, but now they are



North West People's March Against Unemployment, 1993

the ones who are cutting jobs,' Monks points out.

This TUC general secretary doesn't even call for a change of government — that is for a Labour government. Just as Blair goes out of his way to separate the image of the Labour Party from the trade unions, so Monks speaks for his TUC separate from Labour.

He speaks on one of the biggest problems facing the working class without mentioning the party formed to protect the rights of trade unionists. This party still relies on trade union money to carry out its dirty role of politically controlling the working class.

This is connected to the

whole political cause of the Labour leadership — especially the removal of Clause Four.

For Blair and for the trade union bureaucracy, any political independence of the working class must be ended; even every trace of any past striving towards it must be obliterated. The political disenfranchisement of the working class as a class must be complete, so demanding are the requirements of capitalism today.

As for 'commitment to full employment', it should at least be noted that if Monks had called for a Labour government in order to get that commitment, he would have found his words in direct conflict with those of

Blair! For Blair has just proposed a redraft of the Labour Party constitution to get rid of that commitment! Indeed Blair's draft refuses to call for 'full employment' and talks vaguely in the language of 'equal opportunities'.

This completely agrees, of course, with the Tory line that the unemployed are 'idle Jacks' and that all 'disincentives to work' must be removed.

Nationalising

In 1945, at the end of World War II, the Labour Party was in the process of 'managing' capitalism by nationalising basic industries and state intervention to stimulate the economy for 'full employment', along the lines of Lord Beveridge's 'Full Employment in a Free Society'.

Today Blair rejects all that. Capitalism — the real master of Labourism and social democracy — requires that all past gains are taken back. By no means are new reforms to be implemented. Blair's 'Clintonisation' programme for the Labour Party, to make it openly capitalist like the US Democrat Party, reflects this directly.

This is a clue for finding the source of the new 'Clause Four'. In 1945, the US government proposed a 'Full Employment Bill' — opposed by big business at the time. The bill included the right to 'useful, remunerative, regular and full employment'.

This was dropped in favour of the 1946 Employment Act, defined, instead, 'the responsibility to promote free enterprise, under which there will be afforded useful employment to those who are willing and seeking to work'.

Is it necessary to add anything (then or now) to the work of a US senator at the time who declared that the Act 'promises anyone needing a job the right to go out and look for work'?

Book review

Past and future in post-Soviet Russia

Review by Bronwen Handyside

AFTER meeting a Russian refugee in London, a woman who had fled the deprivations of her childhood and youth on a bleak collective farm outside the Russian city of Samara, C.S. Walton decided to go there to see conditions for herself. 'Little Tenement on the Volga' is the result.

Through the microcosm of Samara, and the handful of families she met there, she sets out to capture a picture of the past and future of the former Soviet Union.

Walton describes the 'Nepmen of the Nineties' — the Stalinist bureaucrats who aim to reintroduce capitalism.

'The new Russia is controlled by those who had privilege and power in the old regime,' she says. 'As soon as perestroika allowed them to set up in official businesses members of the nomenklatura became co-owners of factories, banks and enterprises. . . .

'By the 1991 coup, half of all state property had been handed over to companies set up by the nomenklatura. Goods disappeared from the state shops to such an extent that rationing had to be introduced.'

An encounter with a distressed young woman at a neighbour's house introduces the mafia — her husband is later found with his hands and tongue cut off and eyes gouged out.

Walton portrays the peculiar mixture of popular culture arising from the abrupt transforma-

tion of the Russian peasantry into an industrial working class, and peasant backwardness perpetuated by the poverty of material conditions.

Lina Ivanovna Shatalova's story, according to Walton, is typical of many of her generation. Born in the Ukraine in 1934, the last year of the great famine, she owes her small stature to her mother's undernourishment.

At the age of seven, Lina watched the German army invade, the battles that raged around her house, and soldiers shot dead before her eyes. Her grandmother, a traditional healer and 'wisewoman', passed on her knowledge to Lina.

In contrast to the new and old 'Nepmen' — the original Nepmen flourished during the New Economic Policy, started in 1921, which allowed the market to grow in some sectors — Lina contemplates these historical developments from the standpoint of a kindly human being.

She takes no sides, but is one of the only people to help the German 'parcels' — the women who went to Germany with soldiers and came back with children after the war. She does not grow rich through her work as a seer and herbalist — she does it to help others.

After the war, Lina's sister is killed in one of the all-too-frequent industrial accidents. She

had been forced to work lifting heavy oxygen flasks in a factory though in the last stages of pregnancy, and dies in agony after an explosion. Lina takes the baby and brings her up.

She ends her life-story by saying: 'Now, in my old age, I think about the process of winning and losing power. The Germans ruled us for four years and did not manage to destroy communism, but Gorbachev and Yeltsin got rid of it in an instant. However, we do not yet have capitalism. We don't understand it. All people do is buy and sell. We produce nothing. We only have speculation and the mafia.'

Alcoholism

Featuring largely in every family's story is the problem of male alcoholism. Walton complains: 'In all my world travels I have never seen such determined self-obliteration through alcohol.' There has been a marked rise in alcoholism since the collapse of Communism.

She is angered by what she describes as the combined phenomenon of male 'infantilism' and alcoholism, and female acceptance of exploitation.

In Samara, women earn on average 30 per cent less than men (as in Britain). Despite having full-time jobs, they do all the housework, as well as waiting

hand-and-foot on their alcoholic husbands and sons, who spend all they earn on vodka.

The agricultural sector is typical in its treatment of women. According to Walton, '... as in every other sector of the Russian economy, the hardest jobs fall to women. When the process is mechanised, men usually take over.'

'Since the 1960s the proportion of women working as agricultural machine operators has dropped to less than 1 per cent. Women generally work as crop pickers and weeders or dairy maids.'

'Tractor driving is considered a lighter occupation than dairying and is therefore dominated by men. Government campaigns to train female tractor drivers faced concerted male opposition.'

Walton's look at the Russian families of Samara and the lives is fascinating — but she does not have sufficient political/historical knowledge to go beyond observation.

She cannot justify basing her prediction of the future of the whole continent on the observation of half-a-dozen families in one Russian town — no matter how detailed or fascinating her account.

■ 'Little Tenement on the Volga', by C.S. Walton, Claud Press, £5.99, is available from Porcupine Bookcellar (see page 2).

Bosnian unionists in France

THE delegation of trade unionists from Tuzla in Bosnia made a brief but intensive visit of just ten days in France (24 February-6 March). Fikreta Sijercic and Ivica Segat often spoke at several meetings a day of workers and trade union bodies, passionately discussing, debating and explaining their case. You certainly couldn't accuse them of taking it easy!

There were a lot of calls on our time, and sadly their visit was too short to allow them to spend more time outside Paris. They could easily have filled another week, with invitations to speak in Bordeaux and Clermont-Ferrand and to coal and potash miners in Forbach and Mulhouse in eastern France.

Their tour had to concentrate on Paris and Lyons, and as it was they hardly had time to draw breath. They could have stayed longer, but Fikreta and Ivica told us that a month away from home was quite enough.

In fact, after they left France, they did a similar tour in Britain [see Workers Press, 25 February-1 April]. Let's hope we will get another chance to meet them!

They did meet CFDT union federation members in Alstom in Saint-Ouen, members of the CGT union federation at Rhone Poulenc in Vitry, CGT members at the Office du Ble, which regulates corn production across France, and CNT union members at the big FNAC chain of electrical goods stores.

Workers in the militant independent SUD-PTT postal and telecom union did a great deal to ensure the success of the tour. A big thank-you is due to them for all the help in material and trade union terms that they gave.

The delegation also met the big FSU teachers' union and enjoyed support from the socialist-controlled UNEF-ID students' union and another militant breakaway union like the SUD-PTT, the CRC-Sante, which organises health workers.

They also held meetings at labour exchanges — in Choisy, with an audience of 40, and in Paris, with 200.

There was also a meeting of 40 at the Bosnian centre in Lyons. Fikreta and Ivica also met a representative of the international department of the CFDT union, who promised to work to twin their Lorraine region with Tuzla.

In short, they met workers and trade unionists at every level from the rank and file to the top leadership, from the shop floor to national full-time officials. And besides all that, they had a meeting at the Bosnian embassy, met Bosnian refugees at Paris and Lyons, met the committees against ethnic cleansing which have shown an active interest in Tuzla, met Handicap International and, let us not forget, met Workers Aid for Bosnia.

We cannot thank enough all those who gave willingly to make this visit a success — the Bosnian refugees, the trade unionists and translators. Thanks to them the trip went smoothly and the time was put to the best possible use.

This is not the place for a detailed report of all these meetings. But it is worth trying to identify some of the most outstanding features of the visit.

Audience

First of all we should look at the audience Fikreta and Ivica were addressing. These were not the kind of people who normally feel at home on demonstrations and at meetings on Bosnia. Most of them were workers and trade unionists together with Bosnian refugees and activists in the committees against ethnic cleansing.

They did not know a lot about the issue, but they listened very carefully and wanted to know what was really going on behind the media hype. Perhaps some of the questions were not as pointed as they would have been

The following is a translation of a Secours Ouvrier pour la Bosnie (Workers Aid for Bosnia in France) report of the recent visit there of trade unionists from Tuzla in north-east Bosnia. It is to appear in Secours Ouvrier's leaflet calling for the building of the July trade union aid convoy to Tuzla, organised by the Tuzla trade union committee



Secours Ouvrier pour la Bosnie (Workerr Aid) banner on a miners' protest in Paris last year

in certain intellectual circles, but the Bosnian question has now reached wider layers. That is the essential thing that is the great gain of the tour, a firm basis for future activity.

Next, Fikreta and Ivica were able to help us really understand what it means to live in a country at war, and to see that you cannot simply lump all 'evil nationalists' together. They made it clear that they really are defending a multicultural

Bosnia where Serbs, Croats and Muslims are treated equally. They helped us to see that there really is a fascist aggressor, and that this struggle does affect all of us.

They told us about life in Tuzla, such as the rationing of electricity, the struggle to keep life as 'normal' as possible, to keep the young people there and to stop them fleeing abroad, the hard fight to keep public services functioning

despite all the shortages, the struggle against every sort of national discrimination and to maintain all the cultures that make up Bosnia's, and especially Tuzla's, special character.

For example, a Serb orthodox church hit by shells from extreme Serb nationalist Radovan Karadzic's shells was carefully restored.

More than a few workers came to the meetings out of curiosity and left motivated and

committed to support this democratic, anti-fascist struggle. Of course, the kind of trade unionist represented by Fikreta and Ivica isn't necessarily like the image of a typical French trade unionist.

Sometimes the delegates said things about 'needing to start up production again' which raised a few eyebrows. Of course, we had trouble understanding trade unionists who are at the same time part of management! Of course, it was hard to see what distinguished them from Bosnia officials, and to what extent the Tuzla region differed from, for example, the Izetbegovic government.

Trouble

And we had trouble understanding some of the references to Tito or the liberal economic reformer Markovic. Of course, like everybody in eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, they had plenty of illusions in supposed merits of western capitalism...

Many people sensed these differences at the various meetings, but everybody put their feelings to one side: today, Fikreta and Ivica represent a multicultural anti-fascist camp and as such they have to be supported.

Whatever reservations people had, everybody felt that the delegates gave us the opportunity to do something, that we were not reduced to impotence.

In a sense, the wide-ranging character of the discussions and the questions raised strengthen us in our view that only political support can allow the widening and the support of humanitarian aid.

It is only the answers to the questions workers are rightly or wrongly asking that can create a solid basis for organising humanitarian convoys aimed at the trade unions in Tuzla. And to have started putting those questions as widely as possible is a really positive step.

'Newham Monitor' argues 'no platform for the BNP'

'NO PLATFORM for fascists' is the call from the Newham, Monitoring Project, on the front cover of the new issue of its journal, 'Newham Monitor'.

'Their freedom of speech... or our freedom to live? Why Newham Monitoring Project says no platform for the BNP,' says 'Newham Monitor'.

Newham Monitoring Project campaigned against the British National Party candidate in a recent by-election in South Ward, Newham, east London.

Now they are accused of being a front for the Labour Party and of acting 'anti-democratically' in driving BNP canvassers off the streets.

The editorial argues vigorously against both charges. It points out that:

"There are no absolutes in our 'democratic' country. If there were, black people in east London would not be forced to walk the streets in fear of racist attack, despite nominally having the right to freedom from violence.

Cruelly

'Members of our communities such as Panchadharan Sahitharan, Alia Miah, Eustace Pryce, Stephen Lawrence, and so many others would not be so cruelly taken from their families by racist murderers...'

'The truth is, however, rights do not simply exist, they have to be fought for.'

On the charge of fronting for

newham monitor ISSUE 7

Quarterly Bulletin of the Newham Monitoring Project • Spring 1995 • 30p where sold

Their Freedom of Speech...

RIGHTS FOR WHITES

Or Our Freedom to Live?

Why NMP says No Platform for the BNP!

INSIDE BNP lose by-election in Newham • Shiji Lapite killed by police

the Labour Party, the editorial mentions a large number of occasions when they have had to attack Newham's Labour council for not doing enough to fight racism.

It goes on: 'There is an important part

of our statement against the BNP which cannot be ignored by those who signed it' (including a number of Labour councillors).

'It calls on "local people to work together to secure better housing, education and other re-

sources for local residents".'

'If there are those in positions of power who felt it to be no more than "politically expedient" to put their names to this sentiment, then they are in for a shock. WE EXPECT YOU TO KEEP YOUR WORD.'

'NMP has never seen the fight against racism in isolation from wider demands for social justice.'

A short report drawn from the magazine 'Campaign against Racism and Fascism' highlights deaths of immigrants and asylum-seekers at the hands of police and immigration officials across Europe. The report points out that more people have died in this way than as a result of far-right violence.

Reports

The 'Monitor' reports the establishment of the Shiji Lapite Memorial Campaign to fight for justice for Oluwashiji Lapite, who died in police custody at Stoke Newington police station last December.

There is a review of 'In Excited Times: The People Against the Blackshirts' by Nigel Todd, the story of the men and women who struggled against attempts to set up a fascist movement in Tyneside in the 1930s.

■ 'Newham Monitor' No 7, Spring 1995, 30p from Newham Monitoring Project, 382 Katherine Road, Forest Gate, London E7 8NW.

Construction Safety Campaign diary

THURSDAY 20 APRIL: Horseferry Road magistrates' court, Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AX. 2pm. Tel: 0171-233 2000. **Health and Safety Executive prosecution** of Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Ltd and AMEC Civil Engineering Ltd after an incident where a four-metre length of steel reinforcement bar fell, penetrating a glass roof, and landed in the main concourse/ticket office area narrowly missing underground passengers and London Transport staff.

THURSDAY 20 APRIL: Enfield magistrates' court, Wood Green Crown Court Annexe, Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London. 10am. **HSE prosecution** of the London Borough of Enfield alleging breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations. The charges relate to an incident at the civic centre in December 1993 when, it is alleged, contractors working there disturbed asbestos in the fabric of the building. The incident led to major disruption of work on all floors of the civic centre towerblock on the following day.

FRIDAY 21 APRIL: Plymouth magistrates' court. 10 am. **HSE prosecution** of Devonport Royal Dockyard plc after a paint solvent explosion on 11 May 1994 inside a dock gate in the South Yard. Three painters were spraying solvent-based paint when there was an explosion, they suffered burns, some of which were extensive.

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY: City of London coroner's court, Milton Court, London EC2. 9.30am. Tel: 0171-606 3030. **Inquest** into the death of Mr Farragher (54ish) who was killed on a site in Leadenhall Street in the City of London on 18 October 1994. He was working on a

ventilation shaft when some ventilation equipment fell down the shaft from above and decapitated him.

THURSDAY 11 MAY: City of London coroner's court, Milton Court, London EC2. 9.30am. Tel: 0171-606 3030. **Inquest** into the death of Mr Cox — retired painter and decorator — who was killed after being hit by a falling scaffold pole while walking out of the entrance of his home in Edmonton. Decorators working for H.A.T. Property Service Ltd were working on the scaffold at the time. Mr Cox was in hospital for a couple of weeks before he finally died.

Notes on future events:
St Pancras coroner's court, Camley Street, London NW1. Tel: 0171-387 4884. **Coroner's inquest** into the death of Neil Browne, a maintenance engineer working for Surrey-based Seafame, who was killed by electric shock while working on a water heater in a tower block owned by Tower Hamlets council. The HSE ordered Seafame to reassess its staff training.
Harlow coroner's office, Harlow Police Station, Harlow, Essex. Tel: 01279 641212. **Inquest** into the death of carpenter Dennis Gough (43) from Enfield, who was killed on John Laing's £80 million SmithKline Beecham site in Harlow after stepping onto a platform which gave way on 16 March. He died in hospital on 17 March. The inquest will be heard at Shire Hall, Tindall Square, Chelmsford, Essex.
Swansea Crown Court. **HSE prosecution** of British Steel relating to the fatal electrocution of a worker, the case is awaiting a trial date. The coroner raised criticisms at the time of the inquest.

CSC (0171-537 7220)

Stop the imperialist war against Kurds

WORKERS around the world must declare solidarity with the Kurdish people against the imperialist-backed Turkish government's armed onslaught on them.

More than 35,000 Turkish troops have invaded Iraq-Kurdistan — a supposed United Nations-protected 'safe area' — driving thousands of Kurdish civilians to flee from their homes.

Turkish airforce jets have bombed and strafed villages and refugee camps. Troops have taken people away into Turkish-occupied Kurdistan, where torture, 'disappearances' and state murder are notorious.

Repression has increased in Turkey itself, with widespread arrests of Kurdish and Turkish oppositionists and trade unionists. Working-class areas of Istanbul and Ankara were put under martial law recently, after right-wing terrorist provocations sparked people's anger.

In Turkish-occupied Kurdistan hundreds of villages have been destroyed by the army, and people killed on suspicion of support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas. Elected MPs from the region have been jailed or are on trial for speaking out for their people.

This onslaught is being backed by the Clinton administration for US imperialism. Turkey remains a valued NATO ally. Last year the Minneapolis firm Alliant Techsystem secured a contract to supply CBU-87 cluster bombs to the Turkish airforce, a deal dependent on US state department approval.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

The British Tory government is equally implicated, whatever the occasional differences. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd assured the Turkish government of support last year. British Aerospace and Midland Bank are involved in arming Turkey, just as they armed the Kurdish people's other enemy, Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

Marconi, which produces military communications systems, has a factory in Turkey, and is training Turkish officers. British companies are producing 155mm howitzer shells with which Turkish forces could destroy villages.

US, British and French air forces, which fly surveillance missions over Kurdistan, have shared intelligence with their Turkish allies.

In October last year, Kani Yilmaz, a spokesperson for the PKK was invited to Britain, to put to MPs his party's proposals for a political solution to the war in Kurdistan, and for national autonomy for the Kurds. He never got the chance. Acting in

collusion with the Turkish security police, the Home Office had Yilmaz grabbed by police as he stepped out of Westminster tube station.

The Kurdish leader is now in Belmarsh prison. No charges have been laid against him in this country, because he has broken no laws here. 'Mr Yilmaz is a political prisoner in a British jail', as John Austen-Walker Labour MP for Woolwich told a protest rally in London last weekend.

There is evidence that Turkish secret police agents and right-wing terrorists are operating in Britain, with the connivance of the security services. On 29 December last year, Ali Ozturk was shot and seriously wounded while leaving a green-grocer's shop in Hackney, east London. Kurdish and Turkish political exiles believe the Tur-

kish intelligence service, MIT, could have been behind the attack.

According to 'Kurdistan Report' (January-February), the intended target could have been Nafiz Bostanci, a Kurdish human rights activist, who frequents the same shop. The magazine also describes an attack in London last November on British photo-journalist Richard Wayman, by two men with knuckledusters who apparently tried to push him under traffic.

Wayman's photographs of Turkish government atrocities have appeared in several newspapers. He says the CID have 'done nothing' to investigate the attack on him, though he told them he suspected political motives. But last year the Metropolitan Police and Special Branch set up special units to watch

Kurds in Britain, whom MI5 chief Stella Rimington branded a threat to 'security'.

Although Labour MPs Tony Benn and John Austen-Walker spoke at last week's Kurdish protest rally, the Labour Party leadership under has not raised a peep in defence of the Kurds.

Two Labour MPs, one of them foreign affairs spokeswoman Ann Clwyd, were sacked from Labour's front bench for going to witness the war, supposedly because they missed an important Commons vote. But 35 other Labour MPs missed the same vote!



PKK guerrillas killed by Turkish troops in February

Renault wage struggle in France

WORKERS at most Renault car plants in France are taking action for a wage rise of 1,500 franc (£200) a month.

The state-owned car maker is currently being privatised and decentralised. One aim of this process has been to break up union organisation and solidarity between the various plants.

As with privatisations in Britain, the management teams pushing through denationalisation have awarded themselves huge salary increases.

They have seen their pay rise by 22 per cent over the last three years, while the workforce has been offered only a three per

cent wage rise. The management have dressed this up as a 4.5 per cent offer.

Group managing director Louis Schweizer has declared an increase in profits to £480 million. Strikers point out that this represents £8,000 each month squeezed out of every one of the 60,000 employees of the company.

There have been big, militant meetings and intermittent strikes at plants such as the technical centre in Rueil.

At Renault-Lardy in the Essonne department, near Paris, workers have backed national days of action and mounted four-hour strikes every day.

On one occasion they blocked the Route Nationale 20 and on another organised a big barbeque attended by about 500 workers.

The Industrial Vehicles factory (RVI) at Venissieux, near Lyons, has joined in stoppages and has the same demand for a £200-a-month increase.

The factory at Flins has also seen production paralysed by massive stoppages for the £200 demand.

Support for this wage demand is strong across the group, with workers in the different plants anxious to co-ordinate action.

Strikes and stoppages have

been reported at Choisy-le-Roi in the Val-de-Marne department, at Le Mans and at Cleon.

There have been many days of strike action and lightning stoppages, with militant and vociferous demonstrations in Paris and outside the company's national headquarters at Billancourt in the suburbs.

For the first time, the wage demand is being fought for by both manual and technical-scientific grades.

Renault's management has heated up the situation by taking legal action against pickets who allegedly stoned scabs going in to work during a stoppage.

Russian mothers shot by Yeltsin's soldiers

BY ALICE CHRISTIE

THE mother of a Russian soldier reported dead in the Chechen war was told by President Yeltsin's military authorities to search through six railway carriages full of corpses to find her son's body.

'Many of them had no heads', said Darya Dautova, 'and the flesh had been gnawed off their legs and bodies by dogs.'

'My son had two toes stuck together on his left foot, so I went along all the rows of bodies and pulled off their boots to see whether it was him. If they were missing their feet I checked their arms, because my son has a big scar on his right arm.'

Darya's son's name eventually appeared on a list of prisoners, and she now waits with about 50 other mothers in a converted village school in the republic of Ingushetia, near Chechnya, for further news.

Many of the mothers have been at the school for weeks. Two weeks ago they tried to stage a peace march to Grozny, the Chechen capital. They were stopped half-way by Russian soldiers.

'They told us we were in danger from the Chechen rebels,' said Lydia Andreeva. 'But it is not the Chechens we have to worry about — it's our own Russian troops.'

The soldiers shot over the women's heads, then shot two of them in the leg, before pushing them onto a bus with rifle butts.

Many of the mothers have travelled hundreds of miles around Chechnya, searching for their children. All of them remark on the extraordinary kindness shown to them by the Chechen people.

'I just can't believe it,' said Darya. 'If I were the Chechens, I'd kill us. Instead, they feed the mothers of the men who have killed their relatives and destroyed their homes.'

Social unrest means bumpy ride for new French president

NORMALLY, French employers can look forward to a few quiet weeks in the run-up to presidential elections.

There is usually a fall in the number of strikes while people wait and see what the new president will be like.

The current wave of strikes and social unrest in France is a sign that the working class has already decided that whoever is elected in the forthcoming elections is not their candidate and had better watch out.

There have been several stoppages by postal and telecom workers, railways and the Paris Metro. And last week the airline Air Inter was strike bound.

High levels of unemployment have failed to prevent the strikes. Instead, employed and unemployed have started to link up in enterprising new forms of protest.

Recent weeks have seen a demonstration by the unemployment pressure group Agir contre le Chomage, which was joined by immigrant organisations and trade unions.

There is a strong trend now by the homeless simply to occupy empty buildings. They quote a law passed under De Gaulle to legitimate what they are doing, but that has a propaganda rather than a legal significance.

'Occupying' vacant jobs is a more start-

ling form of action that was used to great effect last week.

All three unions representing workers at FNAC, a chain of electrical stores, spent several weeks identifying unfilled vacancies in the group.

Together with unemployed groups, they occupied the stores in question and demanded that the job-seekers they brought with them should be employed on the spot.

A call has gone out to other workers in the shops not to do overtime or to cover for unfilled vacancies.

France's new president, it seems, is going to have a bumpy ride.

Recession warning after German pay deals

BY BOB ARCHER

GERMAN industry will be squeezed between falling profits and rising costs, because of the strengthening of the mark and high wage settlements in the engineering and electronics industries, according to the president of the Federation of German Industry, Hans-Olaf Henkel.

He said there would be further moves to transfer industries abroad, greater pressures to rationalise and fewer incentives for foreign capital to invest in Germany.

Henkel proposed that the anticipated growth rate of two per cent in the second half of the year should be cut to one per cent. Things would have to get worse before they got better, he said.

While the transfer of jobs

abroad was necessary for individual enterprises, it was bad for the national economy, he said.

Steel and machine-tool manufacturers were more upbeat last week, but all employers agree that the strengthening of the mark on foreign exchanges will create difficulties for German exports in future.

In general, the recent wage increase of some 3.5 per cent over the next two years won by the engineering union, IG Metall, has left the employers' side in chaos.

Some employers are withdrawing from the bosses' federation — the Gesamtmetall — mainly because their demands for cost-cutting steps and greater flexibility within the overall agreement with the union were not met.

The strength of feeling among engineering workers

stopped these moves in their tracks.

In eastern Germany fewer than half the engineering employers pay the nationally agreed minimum wage. Those companies which do not often have the tacit acquiescence of

their works committees.

Few of these firms even bother to seek permission, under the special hardship rules, to pay less than the agreed rate, because to do so they would have to open the books to union scrutiny.

Bangladesh garment workers fight for wages and rights

A MILLION garment workers in Bangladesh, 800,000 of them women, were due to stage a 48-hour strike on 11 and 12 April, demanding the implementation of the minimum wages declared by the government but not paid by the employers.

These workers, who work 14 hours a day or more, are also demanding seven other basic rights, including: regular payment of wages; enforcement of

weekly rest days and government holidays; health and safety provisions in the factories; maternity leave; and trade union rights.

The National Garment Workers' Federation of Bangladesh points out that the industry is highly profitable, where the employers reap large sums from abroad. The federation is seeking the solidarity and support of all other trade unionists.

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