

Solidarity with Liverpool dockers

DEFEND TRADE UNIONS

THE lock-out of 500 Liverpool dockers by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company reveals both the crisis in the labour movement, and the possibility of a way forward for the whole working class.

What is at stake is the defence of the right to work with trade union wages and conditions against casualisation and part-time agency work. In that sense it is a fight on behalf of millions of workers — employed and unemployed.

The dockers and their staunchly defended trade union organisation are under threat. The gains won in a century of struggle by their fathers and grandfathers could be smashed up.

The Liverpool dockers' continuous battle to defend these gains has held out hope to all those forced to take casual, part-time work on individual contracts often working in rotten and unsafe conditions.

The 500 dockers are a small force, but they have an average of 30 years' experience in the port and have won great respect in the trade union movement. There is a huge wave of solidarity for the dockers throughout Merseyside.

With only 3 days' notice, 2,000 people marched through Liverpool city centre on 7 October; hundreds of calls to the daily morning 'phone-in programme on Mersey Radio express support; the shop stewards have called weekly public meetings to report and discuss the situation; large numbers are expected to turn out for a demonstration today.

The Transport and General Workers' Union should take heart from this. Workers are getting restless, wanting to do battle against the injustices meted out by ruthless, greedy employers armed with anti-trade union laws.

There is no doubt that the union would win great support and stature if it mobilised the whole membership in defence of the dockers.

In the 1989 strike the 'left' TGWU leadership backed down from organising solidarity action in defence of the dockers because it could have meant sequestration of the union's funds. As one sacked London docker remarked: 'Since then the union has lost over a million members — think what that means for union funds!'

A stand now could encourage workers to join a fighting organisation. This is borne out by the RMT's recruitment of 700 railway workers in September who joined the union after the first successful ballot to strike. The

BY DOT GIBSON

High Court banned these workers from taking strike action.

Yet Tony Blair says that a Labour government will not repeal the anti-trade union laws. Can the trade unions any longer support leaders with policies against these principles on which the party was founded?

So far TGWU officials have engaged in discussions with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company under the auspices of the Arbitration and Conciliation Advisory Service (ACAS).

Liverpool Labour MPs have met company boss Bernard Cliff. Ken Stewart MEP is demanding that all Euro-grants are withdrawn from the company. Liverpool church leaders have voiced their support.

Organisation

On 11 October, Jimmy Nolan, chairman of shop stewards opened a public meeting: 'What kind of organisation is needed for this dispute? Of course we need funds and solidarity resolutions, but what do we do if the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company start bringing in scabs?'

If all else fails we propose to set up a Political-Industrial Steering Committee to discuss and decide our strategy and tactics.'

Last week the company announced that it was no longer responsible for the hire of labour to fill the sacked dockers' jobs. The vacancies have been advertised in the local paper and Drake International Limited has been appointed to vet all applicants.

This company is well-known for its strike-breaking activities at the Southampton Container Terminal in 1989.

Known as an 'emergency hire group' Drake International supplies part-time and casual labour across a wide range of services and industries. Such labour is often recruited from trained ex-army sources.

The Mersey Dockers' Shop Stewards' Committee has taken a decision to fight. The lock-out can and must be defeated.

No trade unionist worthy of the name can walk away from this.



Docker trade unionists outside Port of Liverpool's gates in the early morning as part of their campaign against the lock-out

A conference sponsored by Workers Press

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Workers Press

Crisis of Tory government intensifies

THE defection of Alan Howarth from the Tory party directly into the Labour Party certainly tells us a lot about the character of 'New Labour'. While Howarth was last week welcomed with open arms onto the Labour benches, all the many socialists who remain within the party are threatened with expulsion or lesser disciplinary action, as the case of Liz Davis so clearly shows.

But at the same time, Howarth's movement across the floor of the Commons also reveals the depth of the crisis in the Tory party, the instrument on which the ruling class has traditionally relied to form its governments. Howarth has said that there are some 40 or 50 Tory MPs who share his views, and while there may not be any mass defection to Labour, he is no doubt right. Perhaps these are potential supporters of a Blair-led coalition after the coming general election?

* * * * *

THE Tory party conference that was supposed somehow to heal the deep divisions in the party has actually had the very opposite effect.

Defence Secretary Michael Portillo's jingoistic attack on Europe has re-opened the chasm within the Tory party on Europe. Last week 50 Tory backbenchers went to Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind demanding Portillo's anti-European outburst be rejected. They are joined by leading European Union bureaucrats.

This despite the fact that Portillo's speech was cleared with Prime Minister John Major and was warmly greeted by the latter at Blackpool! The deep split in the ruling class between those who see their future in Europe and those who see it in an alliance with north America against Europe remains, and if anything, intensifies. Such divisions exist within the Labour Party and will no doubt emerge rapidly to the surface should Blair form the next government.

There is no doubt that an important section of big business, fearful that a discredited Tory party leadership has lost the confidence of large sections of the middle class and sensing a new temper in the working class, now see a Labour government as the 'party of order' and the best instrument through which they can preserve their interests, at least in the immediate future.

* * * * *

THE crisis in the Tory ranks is part of a wider European crisis.

The position of French Prime Minister Alain Juppé remains undecided, with a financial scandal still hanging over his head and leading a government which has to beat back the conditions and rights of the French working class if it is to preserve its alliance with Germany as the axis on which the 'stability' of the European Union depends.

In Italy, former prime minister Berlusconi faces criminal investigations as a result of his shady business dealings. He joins two other former holders of this office who are in court for their alleged connections with the Mafia.

NATO secretary-general Willy Claes looks certain to resign as a result of his financial dealings while he was Belgium's economics minister.

In Britain, the Scott inquiry into illegal arms dealing with Iraq has yet to report but it is widely rumoured that it could lead to further government resignations.

So Howarth's entrance into the Labour Party is no small matter. It tells us as much about the nature of New Labour as it does about the crisis of rule which is beginning to emerge throughout Europe.

Letters

Symbols of genocide

I WRITE to you in the hope that you could ask Charlie Pottins to throw some light on a number of remarks he made in his column 'Inside Left' in your 14 October issue.

I completely failed to understand the motives for Charlie's apologetic defence of the 'sahovnica' — the red and white chequerboard in the Croatian national flag.

It has, as Charlie says, a history which reaches far back into the Middle Ages, but then so do the four cyrillic 'S's in the Chetnik emblem — a fact Charlie fails to mention.

It might indeed have been used in the former socialist Republic of Yugoslavia — although my own little research failed to unearth any evidence of an official usage. But all these historical footnotes, as interesting as they may be, become entirely insignificant when you consider the very specific symbolism the 'sahovnica' acquired during World War II.

For the surviving victims — Serbs, Muslims, Jews, Gypsies and Croats alike — of the Croatian 'Ustashe' fascists, the red and white chequerboard will be forever the symbol of a murderous regime, which, in alliance with the Nazis, committed atrocious acts of genocide against all nationalities, including its own, entrapped in its territory.

To deny this symbolism, and therefore quasi-apologise for the resurrection of the 'sahovnica' in the new Croatian republic with its own tradition, would come very close to acquittal of the swastika by pointing out its ancient history as a Hindu symbol and its frequent modern use in art-nouveau decorations.

The chequerboard was the dominating symbol of the para-

phanalia of the fascist 'Ustashe' regime, and the self-styled military-historian and current 'leader' of the new Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, must be, of course, fully aware of it.

Its open display must have been, and still is, an insult and constant provocation for all those who fought against Croatian fascism 50 years ago, and for those who stand in this anti-fascist tradition and now oppose a nationalist and authoritarian regime under Tudjman, who seems to regard himself as part of the political and historical legacy of the 'Ustashe'.

As a member of the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, I fully supported the strategy that the fight for the survival of a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina and against the Serbian Chetniks took precedence over potential struggle inside the Bosnia-Croat Federation, and therefore allowed for strange alliances. But although we shouldn't have illusions about the intentions of the intervening NATO/US forces and their governments, there should be no doubt about the Croatian agenda in Bosnia.

As the war is far from over, and an undivided and multi-ethnic BiH is far from secured, we have to remind ourselves over and over again that Croatian nationalism is still potentially an equally dangerous enemy of the Bosnian people as Serbian fascism has been and, of course, continues to be.

The fascist elements in Croatia, and there are many and powerful ones, as one look at the republic's defence minister will tell you, have to be denounced for what they are, and not for ever and for tactical reasons be exempted from exposure.

It is incomprehensible to me that your paper in one and the same issue first, quite rightly, attacks the 'blatant racism' of Croatian government officials (page 2) and then fails to put this event into the wider historical

context of Croatian nationalism (page 4). To acquit the Tudjman regime from its historical traditions and deny its roots in 'Ustashe' fascism might be a political oversight.

To attack people on the left, who, like me, feel more than uneasy about the 'new' Croatia, its symbols and its leader, and doubt their political credentials, is what you would call 'sectarian' and extremely unhelpful.

Since Charlie Pottins's coverage and analysis of the wars in former Yugoslavia has been, as far as I know of it, consistently excellent, I hope that his remarks about the 'sahovnica' were more of a 'gaffe' than a sudden change of direction.

Jürgen Quick-Tomasevic
London WC1

US nor UN intervention will resolve this 2,000 year old conflict or stop its tit for tat genocide. Let em fight it out. The only long term consequences will be fewer stupid genes.

For some time the RCP has been referred to in Workers Aid circles as the Rape and Cleansing Party, but the time for joking has surely passed. That a magazine claiming to be Marxist could publish a letter which uses fascist pseudo-science to explain the war in former Yugoslavia should shock us.

Blair's New Labour is one clear proof of the need for a new party of the working class. Degenerate Stalinist sects such as the RCP are another.

John Davies
Leeds

Astonishing racism

STUDENT Aid for Bosnia recently held a very successful stall at the Leeds University freshers week. Two tables away, the Revolutionary Communist Party were selling the latest copy of their over-designed journal, 'Living Marxism', the cover of which makes it clear that this strange outfit not only continues to cast doubt over the genocide in Bosnia but now ridicules any mention of ethnic-cleansing or mass graves as just so much US propaganda.

I was interested in a 'Living Marxist' analysis of the caves full of decaying Muslims north of Kljuc so I bought a copy. However my eye was quickly taken — and it has returned several times in astonishment — by an extraordinary racist letter published, without comment, in the journal's letter column.

After some left-sounding, anti-intervention rhetoric the letter in question finishes with the following sentences: 'Neither

Milosevic and Peron

Could Tom Carter say more about the Milosevic regime being Peronist (Letters, 7 October)?

John Ballantyne
London E2

Unco Guid


*My Son, these maxims make a rule,
and lump them ay thegither,
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,
The Rigid wise anither.*
(Introduction to *Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous* by Robert Burns.)

I was thinking of J. Plant's comments about Trotsky's 'On Cultured Speech' and on the high price of books (14 October) as I sauntered around to my local library for James Kelman's 'How Late It Was, How Late'. By the way, where is 'On Cultured Speech' located on the 'net'?

George Angus
London E15

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Bosnia — Solidarity not Charity

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

Published by Workers Aid for Bosnia
Get your union branch, Labour Party, etc., to buy copies

Available for £1 from Workers Aid for Bosnia, PO Box 9, Eccles SO, Manchester M30 7FX. Tel: 0171-582 5462.

Memorial meeting for Maire O'Shea

Irish republican, communist and fighter
Speaker: Bernadette McAlliskey

Saturday 18 November, 2pm-4pm (to be followed by a social)
At the Mechanics' Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1
(opposite Chorlton Street bus station, side entrance)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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UNISON members' fight to raise Bosnia in union

BY LIZ LEICESTER

FIVE public sector union UNISON branches are sponsoring a conference on Bosnia open to all UNISON members to be held in November in London.

The conference has been called by the two Camden branches, Lambeth A, Newham No.2 and Salford Mental Health branches.

It will be hearing a report from UNISON members who went on the trade union convoy to Tuzla last summer and made contacts with health workers in the process of setting up a trade union in their hospital.

A letter addressed to UNISON from these workers appeals for support and aid in their fight for a multi-ethnic society.

Local government and health workers in many branches across Britain have collected aid and finance to assist multi-ethnic Tuzla. UNISON members are planning to go on the Christmas convoy to take aid and develop the links made last summer.

The conference will discuss the situation in Bosnia and its importance for all those who want to fight fascism. It will also consider how to influence UNISON nationally on the issue.

Delegates from Camden and

Salford Mental Health branches were unsuccessful in their attempts to get the war in Bosnia debated at the last two annual conferences.

However, one of the union's presidents was forced to read out the appeal for aid and solidarity from the Tuzla unions after a lot of pressure was exerted on him.

The Newham No.2 branch submitted a motion on Bosnia to the London Regional Council's quarterly meeting on 13 October. The motion condemned 'ethnic cleansing' and called for support for the trade union convoys and affiliation to Workers Aid for Bosnia.

Unfortunately the motion could not be debated because the meeting was inquorate. However Newham's motion and the widespread interest among UNISON members in the Bosnian situation forced the London Regional Committee to make their position clear in a statement remarkably similar to Tony Benn's so-called Committee for Peace in the Balkans.

The statement claims: 'none of the participants in this conflict is blameless of war crimes against civilian populations.'

It goes on to say that the Regional Committee does not believe it is appropriate for the

International community to 'take sides'.

Furthermore the statement claims that it was the 'interference' of the international community, particularly the European Union's 'premature recognition' of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia as independent states that precipitated the war.

This Regional Committee statement finishes by asserting that UNISON should be 'neutral' and recommends the donation of £500 to the Red Cross.

UNISON members who have fought for an understanding of 'ethnic cleansing', the genocidal war against the Bosnian people

and their right to self determination have come up against this line before from members of the SWP and Militant.

They have claimed the situation was 'complicated' and 'hard to understand' and have raised their hands in horror at the call for the lifting of the arms embargo which effectively prevents the Bosnians defending themselves.

In the statement of the London Regional Committee — the executive of the Regional Council which represents all London UNISON branches — the political essence of this position is made clearer.

The Committee's statement clearly rejects the right of small nations to self-determination. Furthermore it blames those people under brutal attack for provoking that attack.

There are those that blame black communities for supposedly provoking attacks by right-wing thugs. But unlike UNISON's London Regional Committee those that take that position do not claim to be socialists.

As one delegate to the Regional Council said, the Regional Committee will support the fight against fascism on the streets of East London but won't do anything about fighting fascism in eastern Europe.

UNISON members attending the November conference will be discussing how to continue the fight in UNISON against this so-called neutrality and reaffirm their commitment to taking sides against fascism, rape and mass murder.

For more information on the conference, please contact Liz Leicester, Camden UNISON, Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, WC1H 9JE. Tel: 0171-278 4444, ext 2345 or 0171-911 1686.

Public meeting launches Newham Aid for Bosnia

BY BOB ARCHER

A PUBLIC meeting at East Ham Town Hall formally launched Newham Aid for Bosnia on 12 October.

Most of the 30 or so people at the meeting have a long record of fighting against racism in East London.

Opening the meeting, Kevin Glowe reported how the moves to get the organisation up stemmed from angry reaction to Serb massacres of Muslim people in eastern Bosnia during the summer.

John Lang, a former print-worker and Labour councillor now in the leadership of the local UNISON branch, reported how the same events had affected him:

'For a long time I was on the periphery, having a viewpoint and not doing much about it.

'When a march was called at short notice I saw a fly poster in Stratford simply saying "Stop the rape of Bosnia".'

'I decided to go. It was a terrific turn-out. Most of the usual groups were not there.

'I'm not in a political group and I've had lots of rows with people.

'Coming back from the march I decided to do something useful about it in my union. I put a resolution to support Workers Aid for Bosnia.'

Faruk Ibrahimovic extended to the meeting the gratitude of the people of Tuzla for the aid received. He criticised the peace deal imposed on Bosnia.

'In such a divided Bosnia it is impossible to organise life.

'Between 250,000 and 300,000 have been killed and many more have been disabled.

'Yet those who are guilty of murder and genocide will escape punishment.'

Phil Edwards, secretary of the nearby Tower Hamlets Trades Council, visited Tuzla with a Trade Union Aid convoy this summer.



Launch meeting of Newham Aid for Bosnia

He described the character of the city: 'We chose Tuzla because it is the working-class capital of Bosnia and a mining centre. It has a large multi-ethnic working class population with 15,000 mixed marriages.'

Phil explained how the convoy had been built up through

extended hard work and how the 80 participants from very different backgrounds had gelled together to form a team.

He described particularly the needs of schools for every kind of educational equipment. He appealed for thousands of pounds to be collected for the December

convoys and for groups to organise trucks to join the convoys.

Newham Aid to Bosnia will continue to collect cash for the Bosnia convoys, meeting at 11am every Saturday morning outside Queens Market, Green Street, Upton Park.

No to nuclear tests!

Joint statement by CGT Union Regionale Isle-de-France & Greater London Association of Trades Councils, Montreuil and London, 11 October 1995

GLATC AND CGT URIF condemn the nuclear tests called by the President of France. CGT URIF and GLATC stand in solidarity with all international forces acting to stop the nuclear tests.

By deciding to resume nuclear tests the French Government:

- Undermines the moratorium that has been observed since 8 April 1993 and the moral commitment made in this period with other countries of the world.

- Ridicules the international community and in particular the people of the South Pacific who had taken its word during the renewal of the TNP (Test Ban Treaty) that stipulated nuclear powers were committed to good faith in the disarmament policy.

- Gives a contrary signal of a new intense arms race of nuclear proliferation in the world.

Information in the British press has also revealed the existence of a secret agreement

between France and Britain collaborating on nuclear tests. The British Government is, therefore, guilty of giving support to this breach of the agreements to create a safer and more peaceful world.

GLATC and CGT URIF oppose this move against peace and disarmament to which the peoples of France, Britain and the world aspire. Contrary to 'official' arguments that are put forward, the security of France and Europe does not depend on nuclear tests taking place on Polynesian atolls.

Today workers for peace and collective security give priority to disarmament measures concerning weapons of mass destruction.

The move for development and cooperation policies on a national and international scale is necessary at a time when three quarters of humanity is in enforced misery.

CGT URIF and GLATC want to contribute totally to the growing world and European protests and they call for the mobilisation, in all ways, of the workers and populations of Isle de France and Greater London in order to force the cessation of the nuclear test programme.

Something bugging you?

MANAGER Averil Dongworth was forced to resign as boss of Luton and Dunstable Hospital Trust after bugging the phone of a radiologist who was opposed to her plans for re-structuring.

She then turned up in seconded posts at Redbridge and Waltham Forest Health Authority, followed by a spell at Homer-

ton Hospital, and has ended up a director of Hackney Community Service Trust. Hundreds of front-line nursing staff are losing their jobs, but this manager is clearly the kind of 'bugger' the government wants to keep.

She is not alone. In September, Amy Edwards, a top civil servant, took the rap for a jail break at Whitmoor. She now heads corporate affairs for the NHS Executive at £60,000 a year! That's about four times a staff nurse's wage!

Public service not private sleaze

UNISON delegates to South East Region TUC reported that they had been forced to change the title of their campaign.

The post office objected to the slogan 'Public Service not Private Sleaze' on the envelopes sent out to publicise the campaign. The Port of London Authority had also objected to the slogan having been used on the riverbus to be used in the campaign.

UNISON have now changed the slogan to 'Speak up for public service'. UNISON points out that this is the first ever demonstration for all parts of the union's over 1 million members and a big turnout is expected at the 21 October demonstration.

They say that in the public services there is a campaign to drive down wages. An example is the proposal to transfer 1,000 jobs from the London Electricity Board to Sunderland where wage rates and costs are lower.

But then, the same meeting of SERTUC was also told that TUC general secretary John Monks

has told staff at Congress House that 30 jobs are to disappear as a cost-cutting exercise.

'Young peoples' future smashed'

YOUNG PEOPLE are working for less pay than 10 years ago, according to a report from the Low Pay Unit. Wages of young people under 21 have fallen sharply since 1985 compared with average earnings. Under-21s were excluded from the protection of wages councils in 1989, and the councils were then abolished in 1993.

A decade ago the lowest paid women aged 18 to 20 earned 53 per cent of the female median wage. By this year the figure dropped to 42 per cent, making them the equivalent of £26 a week worse off. Men in the same age group had lost £17 a week.

The Low Pay Unit's director, Bharti Patel, said: 'Young people are getting a raw deal, finding themselves used as cheap labour and with their hopes and aspirations for the future smashed.'

What's left?

allsend Workers Aid for Bosnia member DNY PARKER decided to leave the Labour Party after its recent conference. Here he says why:

HAVE had to ask myself the question: what does a socialist do when the party he has been a member of for 18 years is hijacked by SDP clones in sh suits carrying mobile phones and cards with Clause 4 deleted?

At first the answer was to stay and fight for socialism inside the party, but this year has been very difficult for me as I have served the leadership steering the party closer to the Tories every week that passes.

My membership card has now been dispatched to the dustbin of history. This was brought about by the decision of the NEC to elect Liz Davies as a candidate in Leeds North.

Can a party claim to be democratic if it takes away the

right of a constituency to select a candidate to fight the Tories at the next election, a candidate who was likely to have been chosen on her record as a campaigner against the Poll Tax, nursery closures and a host of other issues? It seems that socialists can work for the party but are not allowed any access to power or high office.

The often cherished idea of a broad church in the party has been replaced by a narrow church with one high priest with a minority of disciples and one religion. The church of new Labour with its new testament and new commandments, one of which will read 'thou shalt not rock the boat'.

In reality this is nothing new. The ghost of Hugh Gaitskell has returned to haunt socialists in the party.

It is quite likely that there will be a Labour government after the next general election but at what cost to the working people of Britain? I don't imagine there will be much change at number 10 because there won't be any socialists at home.

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British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)

Please send me information about the WRP

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We publish here an article based on conversations with locked-out Liverpool dockers and leaflets produced by the Merseyside Dockers' Shop Stewards Committee.

Defeat of the 1989 strike meant that the union was cleared off all the docks except Liverpool. Now the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company want to finish the job.

In the last six years, the Company has done everything to break the dockers' spirit, to humiliate and provoke them.

At the heart of their struggle are the basic rights to work and combine in a trade union to defend wages and conditions.

As readers will gather from this article, the Merseyside Dockers' Shop Stewards Committee are doing everything possible to reach a just and peaceful settlement of this dispute. They are represented by their parliamentary representatives, local councillors and the church.

If all this fails, they say, they will convene a Political-Industrial Steering Committee to consider how to deal with the situation.

Unity and solidarity against injustice!

Dockers fight for all of us!

Support the dockers' charter!

Defeat the lock-out!

FUNDS are needed for 500 sacked Liverpool dockers and their families. This appeal is to every worker, trade union organisation and community group, not only in Merseyside but in every town in Britain.

Display this page in your window, in your car or pin it up in your trade union office, your club and your pub.

Cheques and postal orders should be made out to: 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Committee' and sent to J. Davies, Secretary/Treasurer, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool, L6 4AS.

SUPPORT THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS!

LIVERPOOL dockers have been locked out by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

Most of the 500 dockers have given their working lives to the docks; many have between 30 to 40 years' service.

The fault lies squarely on the shoulders of the employers who stand for Tory government policy — a low-wage/high-profit Britain.

In 1989, the government abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme, taking away every right won in trade union struggle for over 100 years.

Backed by the anti-trade-union laws and huge government financial hand-outs, the port employers succeeded in defeating the strike, smashing union recognition, cutting wages and introducing part-time casual work in all British ports — except in Liverpool.

This was the only port where a trade union force of dockers continued to exist which was not casualised. But whereas before the 1989 strike there were over



1,000 dockers in the Mersey ports, at the end of that year only 400 remained.

While the shareholders of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company coined government money — over £312 million in 1989, followed by huge Euro and City Challenge grants.

Dockers have had a continuous battle to maintain the conditions and union organisation

which took 100 years to build.

The dockers' fathers and grandfathers had to fight every step of the way against ruthless stevedoring firms for even elementary civilised conditions of work.

Years ago the employers said they could not have decasualisation because of the nature of dock work — the impossibility of accurately forecasting the amounts

of cargo to load from day to day.

Since then, with the advance of technology — mechanisation, containerisation, larger ships, computerisation — together with a concentration of employers, these uncertainties have been removed from the shipping industry.

Yet the port employers' demand for the return of casualisation has accelerated.

Like the other great technological developments today, these advances have never benefited the majority.

Only the hard-faced men and women who control business and finance are enriched by such 'advances' by paying themselves enormous sums of money.

Since 1989 dockers have had mass disciplining, falling safety standards and constant

threats of dismissal. Shop stewards were de-recognised and union rights undermined. The employers abused their power in a most disgraceful manner, using threats and intimidation and consistently refusing to discuss problems.

Four years ago 800 dockers' sons were taken on by Torside Limited on different terms from the other dockers. This was agreed only because the dockers were concerned about the future of the port and the future of trade unionism in the industry.

It was through an attack on this group that the present lock-out was engineered.

Torside Limited 'offered' redundancies, saying they wanted to cut the workforce by 20 and employ agency, part-time labour.

There was a unanimous strike ballot. The employers backed down. But only until the legal 28-day time limit for the ballot was used up.

Then they organised provocation, sacking 80 dockers who put up a picket line which the other dockers would not cross. Then they were all locked out.

SUPPORT LIVERPOOL DOCKERS!

Liverpool is one of the most profitable and successful ports in Britain. The profits of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company exceed £35 million, and cargo handling is greater than in the port's heyday of the 1950s, with a turnover of £130 million. In 1957 there were 16,000 dockers on Merseyside. Today there are 500.

The dockers' crime is that they fought to protect jobs and help young workers to get a future. Their fathers and grandfathers fought against the humiliation, misery and poverty of the old casual system which was also the lot of ship-repair workers, building workers and many others.

Strong unions

Dockers built strong unions. It was the greed and ruthlessness of the port employers which forced militancy and solidarity upon them to protect themselves.

After the Second World War, along with the majority of the British population, the present dockers' fathers decided that they would not go back to the conditions of the 1930s.

Many felt that they had fought for the better world promised with the defeat of fascism. They struggled for security of employment, satisfactory wages and decent working conditions. In 1947, a Labour Government introduced the National Dock Labour Scheme.

Bad conditions

Even after that they were in a constant battle with the port employers who held the main power.

The shipping and stevedoring companies were only concerned with their own profit and looked on dockers as a labour force which should fit their time and physical capacities to what employers wanted.

They worked long hours with compulsory overtime. It was not until 1967, after a solid six-weeks strike that they got proper and decent toilets and washing facilities and only

after they got the press to reveal how bad their conditions were.

Last year the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company imposed a work contract on the dockers, after issuing each of them with a 90-day redundancy notice.

Their jobs were advertised in the Liverpool Echo and 1,800 of Merseyside's unemployed were interviewed. Not one of them got a job. It was a disgraceful hoax to enforce contracts through fear.

Locked out

Today the Company has locked the dockers out, and again they have advertised their jobs. They have received 1,000 applications for part-time employment.

In an attempt to break their solidarity 200 dockers have received personal contracts which offer their jobs on new conditions: **no union, lower wages and the necessity to work with part-time, casual labour.**

Clearly no shop steward, health and safety rep or other trade union activist would even get an offer to sign this slave-labour contract.

The Company has declared its intention to use Drake International Limited to vet applicants. Dockers in other parts of the country remember this company during the 1989 strike-busting activities.

Scab agency

It is described as an employment agency with offices in Charles House, Regent Street, London SW1. The directors are: Robert William Pollock a 67-year old Canadian businessman with an address in Monte Carlo, occupation, president of Drake International Limited; and 33-year-old Ian Roots of Mortlake in SW London, whose occupation is manager/officer of Industrial Overload Limited (a subsidiary of Drake International).

Drake International shareholders are Robert William Pollock and a holding company, Drake International Limited BV of Amsterdam.

A fight for all

The dockers' fight is for

Scab firms: from the 1890s to the 1990s

In the fight for jobs against the combined power of the employers and the government, dockers are no strangers to the use of organised blacklegs to try and break the resistance of the working class.

It was in the period immediately following the famous dock strike of 1889 that the first systematic attempts to use what the employers and the government laughingly called 'free labour' was systematically used.

At the centre of such activities was the notorious William Collinson and his infamous organisation the National Free Labour Association.

Born in Stepney in 1865, Collinson was the eldest son of a policeman who went to work on the docks at the age of 14.

After a spell in the army, he became an omnibus driver and helped organise transport workers. But he developed into a virulent anti-trade unionist and advocate of free labour, defined as 'the right possessed of every man to pursue his trade or employment with-

out dictation, molestation or obstruction'.

Collinson was the moving spirit behind the NFLA which had one central purpose — to supply employers with scab labour in place of trade unionists who had gone on strike.

Each area had a Free Labour Exchange, often staffed by retired police detective-inspectors 'used to handling men and forming a quick and accurate judgement of them'.

Everybody who signed up had to agree to work with union and non-union labour alike — in straight language to act as a blackleg.

The situation that exploded with such violence in the port of Hull in 1803 was typical of the period. The local Labour Exchange posted a notice saying:

'The employers of labour in connection with the docks and shipping at Hull have determined, in order to facilitate the conduct of the business of the port, in employing labour in future, to give preference to men who are registered at the British Labour Exchange and all respectable,

steady workmen are invited to register their names free of expense, and thus secure preference of employment.'

In response a bitter seven-week-long strike started.

Several thousand 'free labourers' were brought into the port under heavy police and military protection.

Two gunboats stood off the Humber and for those seven weeks the town was, in the words of one historian, 'an armed camp'.

There was much violence and there were some attempts, not all failures, at large-scale arson.

Hull became a battleground between most of the local property owners on the one hand and the town's working class on the other, with the Poor Law Guardians acting as recruiting sergeants for 'free labour'.

The NFLA contained open criminals that it recruited from the notorious Kelly-Peters gang but more generally relied on demoralised workers for much of its labour force. But without the open and covert support of the

employers the NFLA could not have become the force it did.

But it also received increasing support from the state, the police and the military as well as the courts.

More and more the courts openly backed employers who refused the demands of the dockers and other workers that non-union labour be dismissed.

The Times, in 1891 during a Plymouth dockers' strike, said: 'Every strike organised for the crushing of free labour [scab labour] is illegal and can be subject to criminal proceedings.'

In the 1890s, the government, the employers and the courts were assembling a package of anti-union laws.

It was this experience of the dockers and the Taff Vale railway workers which sparked the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900.

The Labour Party was founded in 1906 with the main objective of getting Labour MPs into the House of Commons to do away with anti-union laws.

regular employment, for the conditions that their forefathers won and for the right to collective organisation.

Their fight is therefore the fight of millions of men and women throughout Britain, facing uncertainty of employment both day-to-day and long term.

● Everywhere employers are introducing casual labour and individual contracts.

● They want to cut their costs through flexible labour.

● They want workers at their beck and call to be brought to work or

discarded at their will.

● Nearly half the labour in Britain today is casual and part-time.

● In education, in services, in industry, in banking and other clerical work there is a rash of individual short-term contracts.

Pleas ignored

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company have ignored pleas for a negotiated settlement made by senior church leaders, various City Councillors, Liverpool MPs Eddie Loyden, Bob Parry and Joe Benton and Euro MP Ken Stewart. The company has cynically ignored the people of Merseyside.

The dockers want a public inquiry into the use of taxpayers' money by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

● By what right have the shareholders of this company inherited vast property rights, worth billions of pounds on both sides of the Mersey?

● The Government owned a controlling share of the company in the name of the people, but 7 per cent of that was used by the Mersey Docks and Harbour

Company in 1993 to buy the port of Medway. On whose authority was that action taken?

The riverside area has been ravaged. Seafarers', dockers', ship-repair workers', factory workers' jobs have gone. To be sure, when they did work on the Mersey the biggest share of what they produced did not go to them and their families. It was the employers who prospered.

Now, on Merseyside, as in the rest of the country, the fat cats get fatter, while the people are told that there is no money for social and public services and the dockers and others face unemployment for the rest of their lives.

Who are the faceless people behind this conspiracy? As one Radio Merseyside 'phone-in' caller remarked: 'The dock road is saturated with policemen. We can't go down there without getting stopped'. Who are they there to protect and against whom?

Unite to support

The dockers call for sup-

port, saying: 'We cannot allow this tragedy to unfold. Our Port is the historic lifeblood of our community and it symbolises the regeneration of our great city. We can not allow the scars of casual labour, inhumane working environments, the absence of democratic rights of representation, to destroy the dignity of our waterfront.'

'We ask the Merseyside community to support our just cause, to right a wrong. We ask workers everywhere to support us.'

SUPPORT THE DOCKERS' CHARTER

1. No return to casual labour.
2. Real jobs in a profitable and expanding port for the unemployed of Merseyside
3. No victimisation. All sacked workers to be reinstated.
4. Reinstate trade union recognition, and recognise elected shop stewards.



Liverpool dockers picketing to defend the Dock Labour Scheme in 1989

Solidarity, not charity

IT'S always a pleasure to tell readers about an excellent job of work, and the newly published pamphlet *Bosnia: Solidarity not Charity* (Workers' Aid for Bosnia, £1), is precisely that.

In 23 crisply written pages, with some well-chosen illustrations, it tells the story of the July-August 1995 trade union convoy to Tuzla, which had the support of the Scottish TUC as well as the Communication Workers' Union, GMB general workers' union, National Union of Teachers, Association of University Teachers, National Union of Journalists, and many other organisations, including trade union branches and several French unions.

Ably designed and edited by NUJ member Tony Samphier, who took part in the July-August convoy, this pamphlet scores above all by its readable question-and-answer interviews with other convoy participants: Ian Young, Bolton postman and CWU branch secretary; Jim O'Sullivan, Lancing (Sussex) machine maintenance fitter and Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union branch secretary; Jackie Bailey, Camden local government workers and UNISON shop steward; Phil Edwards, Stratford (east London) teacher and secretary of Tower Hamlets Trades Union Council; and Paul Henderson, Leicester university teacher and secretary of Leicester and District TUC.

Their account of what they saw and heard on the trip to Tuzla — delivering food, medical supplies, and educational, telecommunications and mining equipment — is moving and memorable, and all the more so for being simple and down to earth.

Bosnia: Solidarity not Charity sums up its message thus:

'By taking responsibility for the future of multi-cultural society in Bosnia, the European labour movement will find its own voice, independent of the politicians and governments who have conspired to destroy Bosnia.'

Hired heritage

A FIRM that manufactures colour-copiers has chosen to advertise its product on television with film of the Ndebele people of southern Africa in their colourful national costume.

We are told in a caption so brief as to be almost subliminal that these are Ndebele 'tribespeople'. That word 'tribe' came into wide use in the early 19th century to describe (amongst others) African communities, which in English had earlier generally been called 'nations'. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'tribe' in this sense as 'applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarous condition'.

Europeans, being 'civilised', were grouped in nations; Africans were regarded as 'primitive or barbarous' and were accordingly grouped in tribes.

And, incidentally, that wasn't the only way the English language was and still is used to ram home the racist idea of European superiority and African inferiority. Everyone in the world speaks at least one language, and everyone in the world speaks at least one dialect of a language; but have you noticed how often reference is made to African 'dialects' rather than African 'languages'?

Now, the colour-copier advertisement doesn't tell us whether we are seeing the Transvaal Ndebele, who settled among the Sotho in the first half of the 17th century, or the Zimbabwe Ndebele, who established a state in Shona territory in 1838.

Perhaps that doesn't matter much to the many viewers who know nothing of African history or who believe with Hegel and Engels that there's

PERSONAL COLUMN

changed in essentials over these past 98 years.

In 1897 the cultural heritage of the Edo, their entire tangible historical record, was stolen outright when a British 'punitive expedition' took and pillaged Benin City, and a large part of it was put on public display in the British Museum as exotic 'curios' (cf. 'A collection of imperial loot', this column, 9 July 1994).

In 1995 the cultural heritage of the Ndebele, their national dress — in which every colour, every pattern, virtually every thread and stitch, is charged with meaning — is hired for peanuts and put on public display, in the most vulgar and philistine manner imaginable, to make an 'exotic' advertisement for colour-copiers.

Not a word about the fact that, thanks to the long and still continuing history of imperialist exploitation and oppression, almost 30 African countries are in permanent danger of famine.

Not a word about the fact that, thanks to the long history of colonialism and neo-colonialism, one in three of the population of sub-Saharan Africa never gets enough to eat.

The profit-greedy multinationals are happy to show the 'exotic' side of Africa, when they suppose that doing so will bump up sales.

But the grim reality of everyday life for the African masses is not something capitalism wishes to advertise, for it is directly responsible for it — along with the rich despots and their hangers-on who serve imperialism and despise and oppress their own peoples.

Internet v. books?

ENTERTAINING though I've found it, I'd rather not get drawn into the passionate debate between George Angus and J. Plant.

Clearly it's not a matter of either books or internet. Each has its place.

Have you ever, for instance, tried taking a VDU to bed with you? Reading in bed is one of life's more exquisite pleasures, and I can't figure out how it can be enjoyed without a book.

Equally, what computer can provide the incidental but definite pleasures of handling and smelling a book? This isn't a question of 'style of working' but of the sensuous impoverishment of a certain human activity through the elimination of the paper, ink, and binding that have been associated with it for 500 years.

On the other hand, for those who, unlike me, are on the telephone, the internet is no doubt a short cut to all sorts of desired information.

While sitting firmly on this fence I do however want to echo J. Plante's complaint last week about the astronomical price of single volumes of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*.

The latest volume to be published, vol. 47, containing letters written by Engels from April 1883 to the end of 1886, costs £45; Lawrence and Wishart, its UK publishers, tell me that even at that price it is subsidised.

This horrifying price for a series that kicked off in 1975 at £5 per volume means that I for one can never realistically hope to complete my set of the Marx-Engels correspondence, three volumes of which remain to be published.

The main section of the *Collected Works* is now complete. Several volumes of the section devoted to economic writings, including Marx's *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value*, are still to be come.

As to the promised general index to the whole series, that is expected 'one day'.

Peter Fryer

'New order' behind the Tory chaos

BY NICK LEE

SECTIONS of the ruling class and its press are openly celebrating the incoherence and disarray of the Tory government as seen at its recent party conference.

Portillo's rampant nationalism and Howard's jacking up of the law and order and penal policies — followed by his dismissal of the Director General of Prisons, Derek Lewis — are seen as leading examples of this.

This is the view of those sections of the ruling class now openly preparing to rule through a government led by Blair, seen as virtually a foregone conclusion.

From such a perspective, there is open season on Tory politics: Portillo can be ridiculed as a mad 'Little Englander' and Howard as a farcically incompetent home secretary.

It is true that much of what Howard announced at the party conference as yet another step in the toughening up of penal policy is being denounced as rubbish even from within the most impeccably conservative sections of the state bureaucracy.

Howard announced a package of tough measures on prison sentencing which included:

First, reduction in early release from prison for good conduct. The maximum will now be 15 per cent remission of sentence instead of 50 per cent as at present.

Second, automatic prison sentences for adult burglars and drug dealers after a third offence. This is a straight forward adoption of the 'three strikes and you're out' (a baseball analogy) policy of the state of California.

Third, mandatory (automatic) life sentences for rapists and other repeat violent offenders.

Within two hours of Howard's speech no less a person than the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, had reacted angrily. He said two things — first that tougher prison sentences were no deterrent to crime when the detection rate is so low; 'What deters (criminals) is the likelihood of being caught, which at the moment is small.'

Interference

More fundamentally, Taylor hit out at political 'interference' in the independence of the judiciary, a key feature of the 'separation of powers' which is held up as one of the defining characteristics of bourgeois liberal democracy.

'Judges . . .', his Lordship pronounced, 'must be free to fit the particular punishment to the particular crime if justice is to be done. Minimum sentences are inconsistent with doing justice

according to the circumstances of each case.'

His Lordship was joined by prison reformers who explained that Howard's new policies would be likely to result in a further 15,000 prisoners, which would cost £700 million in new prison buildings.

In California, the automatic prison sentence after the third offence has resulted in massive increases in prison populations — 11 new prisons over the last decade, and pressure mounting for six more.

The farcical nature of this policy led, earlier this year, to a 27-year-old Californian being sent to prison for life for stealing a slice of pizza.

Alcatraz

Howard also wants to speed up the building of a British 'Alcatraz', a US-style maximum-security prison for escape-prone serious offenders. He is still smarting from recent breakouts of serious offenders from Parkhurst.

The report, by army General Sir John 'Raging Bull' Learmont, into lapses in prison security, led to Howard's dismissal of Lewis on Monday last.

This caused another furore of adverse publicity for Howard as Lewis went straight to the media to denounce Howard for evading his own ministerial responsibilities.

Liberal concern at Howard and the Tory government can only go so far.

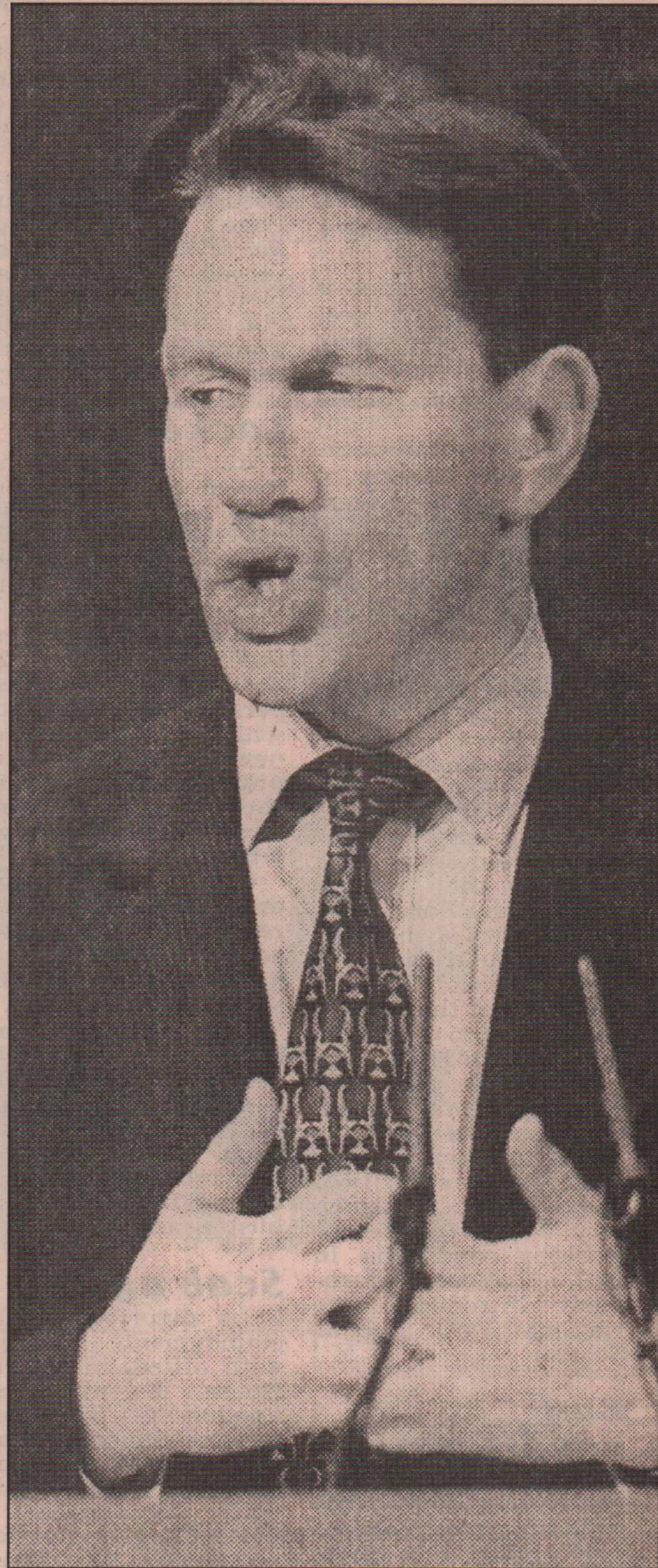
What are the alternatives? Jack Straw (Labour's shadow home secretary) has already staked out his own claim to conservative terrain with his notorious 'clear the streets' speech (see 'Arguments of Straw', 16 September).

A policy which is likely to have exactly the results anticipated by Howard — a large increase in the prison population.

More fundamentally, it is necessary to see the consequences of Howard's new policies as part of the elaboration of a new authoritarian form of state.

The supremacy of the political over the legal and the elimination of the independence of the judiciary is a hallmark of all forms of corporatist and fascist state. What now appears as ridiculous 'interference' in the judiciary can be a rehearsal for something more sinister.

Likewise automatic sentences, and the buildings of separate top-security prisons frees the local prisons to receive the mass increase in third-time offenders, which will of course include large numbers of unemployed working-class youth. In the US today there are more young black men in prison than in college.



Michael Portillo at the Tory party conference last week

This is preparation for an open policy of 'social internment' as a way of containing the working class increasingly surplus to the requirements of Western capitalist economies.

Howard and Portillo are today's eccentric babbling Tory idiots; but they are already lock-

ing themselves into a far more serious and sinister agenda — the reconstruction of the Tory party, or a section of it, as a 'serious' authoritarian right-wing force.

This is the preparation for the disorder and disarray which will soon befall a government led by Blair.

Portillo's pal in secrets row

BY CARL PETERSON

TROUBLE has erupted for Tory Defence Secretary Michael Portillo over disclosure that his millionaire friend and adviser David Hart has been given access to secret information on military contracts.

Portillo's anti-Europe speech at the Tory party conference, like a jingo comic playing to the gallery of an Edwardian music hall, alarmed fellow Tories and former Chief of Defence Staff Lord Carver, by its ignorance as much as its sentiment. The letters 'SAS' meant 'don't mess with Britain', he declared.

The Defence Secretary seemed to confuse the European Court of Human Rights with the European Union; and attacked the prospect of joint command, as

though unaware of Britain's membership of NATO.

But Portillo's patriotic stance, a cover for fighting out Tory differences, brings questions about his own alliance.

David Hart, originally appointed by Portillo's predecessor Malcolm Rifkind, helped set up the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, and backed the fiercely right-wing 'British Briefing' newsletter which smeared Labour MPs as 'reds'.

He is also on record calling for British government backing to the nationalist Serbs, in an article he wrote for the 'Spectator' before joining the government.

But, ironically, in view of his friend and patron Portillo's jingoism, what has upset big military suppliers like Westland, GEC, Rolls Royce and British

Aerospace is that Hart is less than dedicated to 'buying British'.

Two years ago in a 'Spectator' article he accused British Aerospace of making 'specious claims' for its Eurofighter, and suggested buying or leasing second-hand American F-15s would be cheaper.

Hart is an Old Etonian property dealer and ex-bankrupt who acted as Margaret Thatcher's sinister hidden hand during the 1984-5 miners' strike, directing events from a suite at Claridges. A friend of the late CIA boss William Casey, he also backed ex-MI5 man Charles Elwell's red-baiting 'British Briefing'.

He was brought into the Ministry of Defence by Malcolm Rifkind, ostensibly to cut waste, and help sell off surplus MoD property. When Rifkind was promoted to the Foreign Office,

Major vetoed Hart going with him, but Portillo insisted on retaining his services at the MoD. They are personal, as well as political friends — Portillo attended Hart's daughter's christening.

Hart has been given security clearance allowing him access to secrets because his brief now extends to procurement. In a letter to Labour's defence spokesman David Clark, Portillo says:

'Mr Hart provides independent advice to me in only a small number of areas where the department is in negotiations which may lead to a procurement contract. If he were to have a financial interest in one or more of the firms in negotiations for such a contract I would expect him to declare it and would reach a view on his involvement in the light of this declaration.'

The revolt in Hitler's army

Inside left

'Peaceniks' and Chetniks

THE Committee for Peace in the Balkans involves Labour MPs like Tony Benn, Alice Mahon, Diane Abbott and Dennis Skinner, former CND leader Bruce Kent, and assorted 'peaceniks' who belatedly discovered there was a war in Bosnia — about the time the Serb fascists started losing.

Workers Liberty (October) says Serb chauvinists cheered Tony Benn at a 'peace' rally in London on 18 September, when he suggested the Bosnian government had staged the massacre of its own people in Sarajevo on 28 August, to provide an excuse for NATO bombing.

Such remarks may disgust, but shouldn't surprise us.

One of the 'peace' committee's founders, right-wing Tory Sir Alfred Sherman, boasted at the launch meeting in the House of Commons in June, that he was proud of being an adviser of Radovan Karadzic, the Serb nationalist leader in Bosnia ('Sir Alfred's Pride and Mr Benn's Night of Shame', *Workers Press*, 8 July).

Another member, Liverpool West Derby Labour MP Bob Wareing, has made several trips to Belgrade, appeared on Serb television with Milosevic, and went to see Karadzic this summer.

The Committee for Peace in the Balkans held a public meeting on Thursday 12 October, with the slogan 'Missiles don't bring peace'. Elderly Stalinists and CND supporters, sheltered in by 'Socialist Action', rubbed shoulders uneasily with a couple of *Living Marxism* salespersons and a lone 'Spartacist'.

Seen afterwards having a friendly tête-à-tête with some of the organisers at a nearby pub were messrs. Gasic and Gavrilovic, of the Serb Information Centre, mouthpieces for the nationalist Chetniks.

Mischa Gavrilovic spoke on Radio Four on the morning of 26 May, defending the Chetnik mortar-bombing of a café-area in Tuzla the night before, which killed 70 young people.

Perhaps the organisers of the meeting against missiles had a word with him about this. Or about the cluster-bombs fired into a crowded refugee camp at Zivinice more recently, killing women and children.

On 12 October, newspapers reported Arkan's gangs terrorising Bosnian women. Perhaps Carol Turner of 'Socialist Action' took the opportunity that evening to ask the two charming Chetniks for an explanation of organised rape, and Arkan's activities, suitable for socialist-feminists?

Should you encounter 'Socialist Action' in the Labour Party, trade unions or CND, ask them about their chums.

Busted!

THE Red Flag that flew proudly for a while over Islington town hall has gone missing, says the *Guardian's* Matthew Norman (13 October), finding it symbolic after the treatment of ex-Islington councillor Liz Davies. But we reported the flag's disappearance in this column some time ago — 24 April 1993 as a matter of fact (I've just checked).

The bust of one of the London borough's most famous residents, V.I. Lenin, has long gone from the foyer. I assumed that after the Labour council's treatment of its workers Lenin buried his face in the flag in disgust.

According to the *Sunday Telegraph's* diarist Mandrake (15 October) he is down in the basement waiting to go to a museum. But a left-wing second-hand bookseller told friends recently that he'd bought the very bust at an auction. This demands an investigation.

Continuing our series on Yugoslavia's World War II history, CHARLIE POTTINS looks at a little-known episode.

Besides Ustashe attacks, over 2,000 Muslims had been killed by Serb-Chetnik forces in eastern Bosnia in August 1942, and another 9,000, mainly old people, women and children, massacred in February 1943.

Once Berlin gave the go-ahead for a Muslim division, the Muslims' desire to lay hands on firearms and be trained to use them probably played as much part in recruitment as the visit of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el Husseini, in April 1943, urging a Muslim-German alliance. (The mufti had been one of the leaders of the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine.)

Muslim clergy helped recruitment. The 13th 'Handzar' division as it would be called (after a Turkish dagger) was to have a young mufti attached to each unit for spiritual guidance.

Some 12,000 men were quickly enlisted, most of them more or less volunteers. But disillusionment soon set in. The officers were nearly all ethnic Germans, no nonsense about equality. And whereas many Bosnians had imagined they would get some kind of territorial home guard, the force was sent off for training in Germany and France, and there were rumours it would wind up on the Russian front.

Besides, other contenders were starting to attract young Bosnian Muslims. The new star on the horizon was red. At the 13th Division's training headquarters near Dresden, discontented soldiers gathered around 25-year-old Ferid Dzanic, from Bihac.

Partisans

Dzanic had studied railway engineering at Belgrade, been called up to the Yugoslav army in 1941, and joined the partisans in the Autumn of 1942, becoming political commissar of his battalion. Captured in an ambush in March 1943, and sent to a prison camp near Sarajevo, Dzanic had evidently persuaded his captors to release him to, as they thought, join their side.

Dzanic confided his ideas for revolt to Bozo Jelinek, a 23-year-old Croat from Slavonia.

Jelinek, had been imprisoned for Communist Party member-

ship in Zagreb in 1941. After his release the party sent him on a mission to Zenica, from where in 1943 he was taken into the army and sent to Dresden.

There was unrest among both Bosnians and Croats, some conscripted against their will, at having to do navvying work for the Germans, and at Nazi racism and ill-treatment.

When Bosnians and a unit of Croat sappers were sent to Villefranche de Rouergue in August for further training, Djanic and Jelenek were joined on the train by 19-year-old sub-lieutenant Nikola Vukelic, originally from Gospic in western Croatia. He'd written home to say he'd 'Had enough of Dresden, and of Germany'.

In Villefranche, through the good offices of Maurice Delclaux, restaurant manager of the Hotel Moderne, the conspirators were put in touch with an officer of the Resistance.

There was already at least one Yugoslav, Milan Ralafatic, alias 'Fernand', and a Brazilian, Apolino de Carvalho ('Edmond') who had fought in Spain, leading underground fighters in the region.

On the night of 16-17 September, the mutineers struck. At ten past midnight, Lieutenant Kirschbaum the battalion commander was taken prisoner and along with other officers brought before a rebel tribunal, condemned to death and shot.

A Colonel Eck was only wounded and managed to get away. Sub-Lieutenant Schweiger, a medical officer from Carniola, persuaded the rebels that he was a compatriot, and they should let him go. He was able to raise the alarm and come back with loyal Nazi troops.

By 4am the rebels had taken over the gendarmerie post and railway station. Some 200 armed themselves and made off for the country. Others hesitated, not knowing the French language or the local terrain. Shots could be heard.

Hodja Halim Malhec, the Muslim chaplain, urged soldiers to give up the rebellion and surrender to the Germans. Mutineers burned the battalion's papers, so reprisals couldn't be taken against their families.

Villefranche's mayor, Jean Baudin, had been woken by shots. He looked out to see a detachment of troops led by an SS corporal, who shouted: 'The communists have attacked us!'

Schweiger, clutching a sub-machine gun, and highly agitated, said he must announce a state of siege. Baudin reminded him that he was only a doctor, not a military commander, and said only German officers were qualified to call a siege. Schweiger ran to 'phone frantically for a German officer.

Group

Dzanic took a group of 40 men and tried to break through the German forces now encircling Villefranche.

At the Haut-Guyenne roundabout he was killed in a gun-battle. In the town centre Vukelic was wounded. He was later captured, and after three days of torture by the SS he was shot.

German reinforcements arrived. Guided by a Vichy military police man, SS units moved into the narrow streets of the old part of town, where some of the mutineers had spread out, hoping to hide and make for the countryside later.

Grenades and machine guns were used, as the Yugoslavs, though short of ammunition, would not give themselves up easily. By late afternoon there were 30 or 40 bodies in the streets.

The manhunt for escaped Yugoslavs went on for a week. As well as the town, SS units with armoured machine-gun carriers scoured surrounding villages and fields. Over 100 of those recaptured were executed, lined up before a pit and machine-gunned.

Many rebels were helped to get away by local people, and joined the Resistance. Marie Regoud, an elderly widow, saw a man hiding behind a pile of logs under the railway bridge near her home.

There was an SS guard at the other side of the bridge. Mme Regoud made a sign to the fugitive, and came back past the SS man with some old clothes in her shopping basket. She stood watch while the Croat got changed, shoved his uniform in her basket,

VILLEFRANCHE de Rouergue is a small town in the south of France. In the Summer of 1943 it didn't seem as though much was going to happen there.

On 14 July, the Resistance called demonstrations in Lyons, Marseilles, Grenobles and Montpellier. Students in Villefranche held a procession to the war memorial, and sang the Marseillaise as they passed by the military prison on the other side of the River Aveyron.

The police, torn between subservience to the Vichy regime and uncertainty about the future, did not intervene. Some of the young people marching that day later distinguished themselves as Resistance fighters.

On 25 September, the local weekly newspaper *Le Narrateur* attacked Anglo-American bombing of French towns; explained that German forces on the Eastern Front were 'regrouping to more defensible lines', and denied that Corsica had been abandoned to the Allies.

It briefly reported the arrest of some 'terrorists' on 21 September for the sabotage of mines and electricity pylons in the region; and said cafés in Villefranche-de-Rouergue had been subjected to a 24-hour closure 'because of events which had taken place'.

These events, which the citizens of Villefranche knew about but the newspaper was not supposed to mention, had so shocked the Nazi occupation-regime, in fact, that after brutally repressing those involved, it wanted the affair quickly forgotten.

There had been a revolt in their own armed forces. Not of Germans, it was true, but of soldiers from the Reich's Balkan empire.

Like any colonial power, the Nazis used a policy of divide and rule among their subject peoples. Long-term racial ideology contended with pressing military needs.

Early in 1943, Hitler ordered the SS Prinz Eugen division, mainly ethnic Germans, to raise a new division in Croatia. Himmler proposed recruiting Bosnian Muslims.

Some Muslim leaders had already approached the German government asking that Croat Ustashe operations on Bosnian soil be stopped, and offering to raise a Muslim force to protect the country.

Bosnian war destinies

Life writes bitter stories

BY MIRZA MUKIC
Independent journalist
Bosna Est, Tuzla

THE Tuzla orphanage live five ter-orphan Ibrahimovic expelled from Srebrenica.

In the Tuzla orphanage you find dozens of examples that often writes bitter stories. One of the most remarkable is the destiny of the sisters Ibrahimovic who came to Tuzla when Karadzic's Chetniks had seized Srebrenica, so called 'safe haven' expelled them.

play a game with the sisters Ibrahimovic three years ago when their mother was killed by a Chetnik shell. Their father was working in Libya then and the children were left to the mercy of a life which was not tender towards them.

When they lost their mother Emira (18), Ibrahimia (15), Muska (12), Sema (7) and Samela (6) organised a life in which the eldest, Emira, took the role of the mother devoting most attention to Samela who was then only three years old.

The sisters, together with thousands of other expelled peo-

ple after the fall of Srebrenica to Karadzic's Chetniks, left for Tuzla — a long journey full of uncertainty and temptations. At last they found themselves in the orphanage in Tuzla, alone without anybody to help and without any idea of the future life would hold for them, but glad to be together.

They have lost their mother for ever, but there is a slight trace of hope that they might see their father one day.

Their father had returned from Libya in the meantime, but he could not approach Srebrenica.

plete blockade. A witness told the sisters that he had seen their father who had been captured by Chetniks and taken to the nearby village Kravica. Since then every trace was lost.

But thoughts and hopes that they may meet their father make life bearable.

While this uncertainty lasts Emira, Ibrahimia, Muska, Sema and Samela live their life resigned to the situation and resources of the orphanage.

Emira is going to marry. It will part her from the other sisters, but that's life. The older

complete their training in hair-dressing and tailoring and Muska and Samela will start going to school soon. They all look towards Srebrenica with great expectations to meet their father or to hear news of his fate, whatever it is.

In the meantime some families in Tuzla want to adopt these children or to offer more particular care to the youngest girls.

The sisters have decided to continue their life, difficult but happy being together, even though in the orphanage.

Translated by Faruk Ibrahimovic

No peace till Bosnians free!

Arkan's gangs prey on Serbs too

SERB gangster Zeljko Raznatovic, or 'Arkan', notorious for organising brutal 'ethnic cleansing' operations against Muslims and Croats, has unleashed his thugs to plunder hapless Bosnian Serbs as well.

Following in the wake of Serb-nationalist forces, Arkan's killers, backed by the Serbian government, left a trail of destruction and corpses from Vukovar in Croatia to Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia.

In north-west Bosnia recently they have driven thousands of Muslims from their homes.

As at Srebrenica, men and even young boys were separated out in the manner of Nazi 'selections', and taken away, presumed killed.

Some women were dragged away and gang-raped. The rest were herded towards the front-line.

Ismeta Ogresovic, from Prijedor, managed to smuggle her 17-year-old son on a bus when other men were taken away, but later a Serb soldier caught them, and put a knife to the lad's throat.

'He wanted 1,000 deutsche-marks not to kill my son or rape my daughter,' Ismeta said. 'I had no choice. I had to pay.'

They were made to walk along a track through the woods, and saw the bodies of two Muslim women in the mud, one with a gaping head wound.

'We could hear women who were taken into the woods screaming. We knew what was happening to them, but we were afraid to turn our heads to look.'

The arrival of thousands of

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

'ethnically cleansed' victims with such accounts of Arkan's actions provided an extra spur for the Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH) army to continue its advance into Serb-held territory.

Bosnian forces recaptured Sanski Most, a town around which Arkan's gangs had been clearing people.

BBC news readers, seemingly ever-loyal to the Foreign Office's backing for Serbia, continually referred last week to the 'ambitious' Bosnian Fifth Corps, presenting it as though it was the aggressor breaching a cease-fire.

Not once did they mention what Arkan's murder gangs had been up to, or the mass graves of its earlier victims.

Many of the Fifth Corps soldiers and those in the 18th brigade on Mount Vlasica are survivors of 'ethnic cleansing' and Serb-run concentration camps like Omarska.

They have an ambition - to



Many Bosnian soldiers are survivors of camps like Omarska

settle accounts with the Serb Chetniks and fascists, so they can get back home, and try to live a free life in their own country.

Last week, as Serb warlords Karadzic and Mladic sacked their 'prime minister' Dusan Kovic and a couple of generals, and vowed to continue their war, events took an ironic turn.

Thousands of Bosnian Serbs fleeing from the front line huddled into the Omarska camp, originally a disused iron mine, where Muslims and Croats were held and abused by the Serb nationalists in 1992.

Arkan's thugs, most of whom were sent from Serbia to carry out 'ethnic cleansing' because

unlike local Serbs they would have no ties with Muslim neighbours, turned on Bosnian Serbs.

They went through the refugee camps rounding up reluctant Serbs for the front.

'They took everyone, old men, sick men. They took my husband and my three sons. One of them had been wounded twice,' said Jovanka, from a village near Sanski Most ('Guardian', 17 October).

Many of those rounded-up were beaten, and had their heads shaved.

One old man who complained about conditions was beaten almost to death. Serb refugees said they had been attacked and robbed by Arkan's men.

According to Julian Borger in the 'Guardian':

'The Arkanovci have proved themselves to be far more efficient looters than fighters. It is a fact reflected in their bulging waistlines and expensive four-wheel drive vehicles parked outside the Hotel Bosna in Banja Luka.'

Although he is a Belgrade racketeer and his gang's headquarters are in Serb-occupied eastern Croatia, Arkan has been taking part in Karadzic's Bosnian Serb assembly, presumably representing Serbian president Milosevic and his secret police, whose service he has enriched himself.

Whatever agreements are forced upon the Bosnian government by the great powers, even the promises to restore service to Sarajevo and open the road to Gorazde are kept, there can be question of real, ongoing peace in Bosnia so long as racist murderers and psychopaths like Karadzic and Arkan are at large and Serbia's Milosevic is backing them.

The Bosnian people - Muslim, Croat or Serb - will have to unite in destroying these fascist forces, just as the working class here must sort out their backs both in the Tory Right and among the rotten Stalinists influenced 'lefts'.

Ministers in the dock (or 'So you think you've got problems!')

BELGIUM

NATO Secretary General Willy Claes may be charged with complicity in fraud, forgery and 'abuse of office' if Belgian MPs decide to take away his parliamentary immunity. Claes is among leading Belgian politicians accused of accepting bribes to help an Italian helicopter firm gain military contracts.

Former Defence Minister Guy Coeme has denied involvement in the payment of a £1.5 million bribe by French aircraft manufacturer Dassault in 1989. Four high-ranking Socialist Party politicians have had to resign in recent years. Questions are being raised about the murder of another in 1991, and the suicide of an airforce colonel in March this year.

NATO governments have said they have full confidence in Claes, but behind the scenes, approaches have been made to

former Danish foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen and German defence minister Volker Ruhe as possible successors.

FRANCE

Finance Minister Jean Arthuis has denied knowledge of a secret Swiss bank account into which French businessmen deposited the equivalent of £3 million over a six year period to fund his party, the CDS.

It is alleged that big sums in cash from the fund were distributed to politicians at airports and hotels.

François Froment-Meurice, a former member of the European parliament charged with fraud has claimed all CDS leaders knew about the account, but that only M.Arthuis knew the name of the Geneva banker, Henri Albert Jacques.

Prime Minister Alain Juppé has recently sidestepped

demands for his resignation over the scandal of providing himself and his son with luxury apartments when deputy-mayor of Paris.

Juppé agreed to move out of his flat and a court decided it would not be in the national interest to prosecute.

SWEDEN

Deputy Prime Minister Mona Sahlin, a Social Democrat who once said 'paying tax is fun', has admitted misusing an official credit card and failing to pay her bills, but says she will fight to clear her name if there is a criminal investigation.

The Stockholm 'Expressen' has reported that Ms. Sahlin used a government credit card to make private purchases, and had been contacted by bailiffs over unpaid income tax, television licence, and 19 parking fines.

'I may have been sloppy with

my life but I'm not a dishonest person and I'm not a cheat', Ms. Sahlin said in a radio and television broadcast. Under the newspaper revelations she had been tipped to become prime minister next year.

ITALY

Former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who had been expected to be the right-wing candidate for prime minister at the next election, likely to be held in March, could be sitting in dock on corruption charges instead.

Berlusconi, who promised his party would clean up Italian politics, has been committed for trial along with his brother on charges relating to alleged 380 million lire (£150,000) bribes to tax officials between 1989 and 1994, to ease on his companies.

The proceedings are scheduled for 17 January.

Britain balks at 'Marshall Plan' for Bosnia

ATTEMPTS by the European Union to organise a 'Marshall Plan' for Bosnia to aid post-war reconstruction, have met stiff resistance from G7 countries including Japan and Britain.

Britain wants the project to be under the directorship of the World Bank rather than the European Commission and Japan balks at being asked to put up a third of the £2.5 billion bill.

Other countries on the list - Russia, the USA and some Muslim

states, have so far not commented on the plan.

Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Siladje and foreign minister Muhamed Sacirbey were in Brussels last week pleading for funds.

Siladje said the Bosnian government was seeking to continue with plans for privatisation and believed they had met all necessary pre-conditions to become a partner of the EU. He hoped Bosnia could join the World Bank and IMF.

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Mass arrests in East Timor

INDONESIAN authorities in East Timor said last week they had arrested over 150 young people in Dili, the capital, after clashes between local youth and Indonesian settlers.

Colonel Andreas Sugianto said his police were continuing house-to-house searches and arrests of suspects.

Trouble has been flaring up for the past two months in Timor, where a strong independence movement confronts Indonesian military occupation.

The former Portuguese colony was taken over by the Indonesian army in 1975. In recent years the Indonesian regime has encouraged people from other islands to settle there.

There is concern now among

Timorese and Indonesian democrats that reactionary agents may be trying to fan the flames of religious conflict.

Demonstrations broke out last month after a prison official made derogatory remarks about Catholics. Both prisoners and warders complained.

After soldiers were reported to have entered a church and insulted the priest, riots broke out in Dili and several other towns.

Youths attacked Indonesian-owned shops and torched the Comoro market, where most of the traders were from Indonesia.

Imprisoned Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmao sent out a message from his Jakarta

cell hailing 'acts of genuine revolt' by the people, and warning that there could be 'no peaceful co-existence with the occupiers'.

Indonesian President Suharto insisted the trouble had 'no relation whatsoever with the question of the territory's integration in Indonesia'.

But in Bali, Major-General Adang Ruchiata claimed:

'The disturbances were instigated by the 3,000 people who are everywhere, in Bali, Malang, Jakarta and Salatiga. They maintain regular communications with each other and with the movement in East Timor'.

The Jakarta daily 'Republika' ran a series of articles alleging

discrimination against Muslims in East Timor, and claimed that 'if all the material in our possession were to be made public, Muslims would be very angry'.

At mosques and Islamic colleges in Bandung and Jakarta there were collections for help to Muslims in Timor, and messengers demanding firm action against rioters.

Mulyana W. Kusuma of Legal Aid Institute agreed Muslim community should be protected but said the essence of conflict in East Timor was an unresolved issue of its integration in Indonesia.

In Dili, Muslim youth, whose families are mostly from other islands, clashed with local Timorese youth.