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GAS BOSSEST IREAT BRITISH GAS bosses will sack 10,000 TO 10,000 JOBS pipeline engineers if they are forced to curb their massive profits. They threw down this piece of blackmail after the industry's watchdog Ofgas demanded that British Gas cut charges for use of its pipelines. Even if all the savings were passed on to customers

they would cut the typical household tax bill by a miserly 50p a week. But the ordinary customer

might get nothing. Pipeline operators were quick to cry that their profits were so low that they were not necessarily able to pass on the proposed reductions to buyers.

But big business will gain handsomely. Larger industrial gas consumers, with plenty of muscle, stand to profit by upwards of £40,000 a year from the proposed reductions.

British Gas deputy chairman Philip Rogerson also said that even the modest curb on profits would threaten safety standards.

BY THE EDITOR

Rogerson said that an appeal would now be lodged with the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to get the decision overturned.

Scandal

THE history of British Gas has been little short of a scandal:

To buy votes the Tories ten years ago sold the industry at well below its real value. That is why British Gas shares shot up from 135p at

privatisation to a peak of 357p in 1994. This was a fantastic return on what is one of the lowest risk investments in the country.

■ Shares fell back over the last year only because of the crazy contracting policy of British Gas chiefs, who committed the company to purchasing gas for up to 20 years ahead at grossly inflated prices.

This led to the proposed splitting of the company in a way that means the domestic consumer will pay for this commerical folly.

British Gas's pipeline arm, Transco, has regularly resorted to questionable devices to boost its monopoly profits. It constantly inflates investment forecasts to justify high costs. It then squirrels away unspent budgets. Experts say British Gas has made £2bn by this dodge alone.

Experience

THERE are some important lessons for the working class from this experience:

■ Committees of workers and consumers, assisted by sympathetic accountants and economists, must examine every aspect of the finances of this privatised monopoly and the role of the government in its affairs.

■ The Labour leaders must be told: we want the industry renationalised, without compensation, and to be run under the control of these committees.

This is the only answer to British Gas's blackmail.

Mawhinney Four sentence

THE three students and one lecturer who threw orange paint at Tory MP Brian Mawhinney in protest at the Asylum and Immigration Bill were sentenced on Tuesday last week.

They were given sentences of community service or attendance centre orders. They were also ordered to pay costs.

The Land Is Ours squat London -- story



International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign — African Liberation Support Campaign Conference address: PO Box 18, Epsom, KT18 7YR, Britain. Tel/Fax: +441372 721 550

AN INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' CONFERENCE

- Trade unions independent of the state and the employers
- Democracy in the trade unions
 Workers' internationalism

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Saturday-Sunday 8-9 June, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Near Holborn. Start 10.30am Saturday, 10am Sunday.

This important conference is convened jointly by the ITUSC and ALISC. It will follow the 'Africa Month' here in Britain. We will be discussing and deciding how to take forward workers' international solidarity in the coming struggles. Delegates will be travelling from Africa, India, Bangladesh, South America,

Therefore, rather than have a set attendance fee we are asking you to give whatever you can towards the cost of the conference and the fares of those

Russia, Ukraine and eastern Europe.

delegates. A draft resolution will be sent to you, and we ask you to keep in touch during the preparation of the conference and let us have any resolutions and/or written material on the issues you wish discussed.

Funds needed: send money now!

ITUSC meeting: Sunday 20 May, 2pm

Queen's Head pub, Acton Street, London.

King's Cross tube, off Gray's Inn Road

Agenda: Preparations for the International Workers' Conference on 8-9 June

All comrades and friends welcome

Scargill and immigration, p2 ● LA truckers, p3 ● William Morris, p4&5 ● General Strike, p6 ● Beveridge, p7 ● Nuclear fear, p8

Workers Press

Arthur Scargill and immigration

NO DOUBT many people who have joined Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party have done so because they are sick and tired of the Labour Party and want to see a genuine socialist party built in its place.

But what can such people make of the fact that at its first conference the SLP carried a motion — against a sizeable opposition from the floor — in favour of some form of immigration controls. If it came to power the SLP, says its policy document, would establish a 'humane and non-racist immigration system'.

The 'argument' used to justify this position of the SLP leadership — that a socialist Britain would have to keep out white racists from South Africa and other such elements — is ludicrous,

disingenuous and dangerous.

In the first place, why in heaven's name should racists and anti-socialists want to come to a country where the working class has established its power? No doubt under those conditions the working class would need no lessons in how to deal with anybody, white racists or anybody else, bent on undermining its power and restoring the rule of capital.

But this argument is disingenuous because it is designed to avoid the question of the racist immigration controls that presently exist.

It is above all dangerous. Socialists can have only one answer to immigration controls of any sort: complete opposition. Such controls have only one purpose — to divide the working class internationally so that its fight can be deflected away from the real enemy, that is the tiny handful of financiers and industrialists who today control the wealth of this planet.

The owners of capital are certainly no respecters of national frontiers. Their capital roams the globe at will, seeking out the maxi-

mum gains.

A worker has only one thing to sell: his or her ability to work. That is why it is a basic workingclass right that all workers should be able to sell this ability wherever it fetches the highest price, or wherever the worker wants to live.

This is an inalienable right against which no question marks can be placed.

ARTHUR SCARGILL was one of the SLP's leaders who voted against various amendements to the SLP's policy on immigration. One such amendment simply called for the scrapping of all immigration controls.

It is perhaps timely to recall that Scargill has always favoured bans on the importation of 'foreign coal' into this country on the grounds that this would protect 'British jobs'. Quite how the president of the National Union of Mineworkers explains this policy to miners abroad one does't know.

This same narrow nationalism is reflected in the dangerous position that the SLP has adopted on immigration controls, one that can only help divide British workers from their brothers and sisters who have been driven to come to this country in the often desperate attempt to earn a living.

There is no doubt that the British working class today needs a new socialist party, one that can unite it and represent its real interests. But that party has to be international and internationalist. It is one that must say loud and clear: down with all immigration controls!

Socialist Labour Party members must challenge their leaders on the policy they adopted at the party's founding conference and demand that it be immediately changed.

Letters

WE WELCOME LETTERS SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS, PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB - OR FAX 0171-387 0569

Letters longer than 500 words WILL be cut

Australian lecturers strike

UNIVERSITY staff across Australia held stop-work meetings on 8 May in support of our pay claim and against budget cuts.

At Melbourne University we marched 350-strong down to the city - 70 per cent of the number who marched on 11 November 1992 when the whole state was on strike.

We came together with other branches in a great stop-work meeting at the Athenaeum with 1,200 members. A motion in support of a nationwide 24-hour strike on 30 May was passed unanimously.

Attendances at stop-works around the country were: Melbourne, 1200; Sydney, 700; Orange, 11; Adelaide, 450; Woollongong, 200; Newcastle, 67; Flinders, 200; UNSW, 70; UWS, 120; Wodonga, 18; Macquarie, 70; Bendigo, 80; Gippsland, 60; UNE, 52; Ballarat, 73; Geelong, 100; Warrnambool, 56.

Everywhere except Geelong the motion was passed unanimously or overwhelmingly. At Geelong there were 20 votes against, from academics who believed more emphasis should be placed on jobs and less on wages.

The meeting at Melbourne was great.

Lots of non-union members attended the meeting, carried along by the enthusiasm to do something, and union membership is still growing daily.

My own enjoyment of the day was enhanced by the fact that on the Monday the director of my Department tried to tell me I had no job unless I agreed to withdraw from union work, and within 24 hours had to totally withdraw and appoint me permanently to the position I've been acting in.

Andy Blunden Melbourne, Australia University disaster trial

MUIR Construction is up for trial before Sheriff and jury. The charges arise from a building disaster at Dundee Univeristy where three construction workers were killed last June: Michael Shirkey, aged 49; Derek Kenneth, 40; and Christopher Tawse, 51. Muir was the main contractor.

■ The trial is to take place on 28 May at Dundee Sheriff's Court, 6 West Bell Street. Tel: 01382 229 961.

Appeal from Bosnian miners

SUPPORTERS of the Bosnian miners' delegation of four from Tuzla gathered in a pub last week for a farewell social evening. Those present included Workers Aid for Bosnia, the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, Bosnian refugees and local trade unionists.

Fikret Suljic, the union president, thanked Workers Aid and situation facing miners in Bosall those who had made their visit possible. He said that their visit had helped in rebuilding trade union internationalism and solidarity. He hoped that the refugees would one day be able to return home to their country.

The delegation had spent two weeks in Britian and had held meetings across the country.

Their first meetings were with sacked Liverpool dockers and the Women of the Waterfront. The Bosnian miners and the Liverpool dockers had formed an immediate bond and found themselves speaking together at several meetings: the Liverpool May Day, the Leicester TUC May Day rally and a Bosnia Solidarity Campaign public meeting in London.

The miners met with Communication Workers Union representatives in Manchester and CWU leaders at the union school in Oxford. The CWU are sending supplies to communication workers in Tuzla.

Meetings were also held with Lancaster and Oxford TUCs, National Union of Mineworkers' president Frank Cave, the North East Area NUM, international officers of the public service workers' union Unison, the **Transport and General Workers'** Union, the TUC, the National Union of Journalists, Fire Brigade Union executive members in London and Liverpool, Calum

MacDonald MP from Labour Friends of Bosnia, and with women from Teesside Bosnia Solidarity who had just returned from taking supplies to women's organisations in the mining town of Banovice.

Everywhere the miners' delegation made a simple and straightforward report of the nia and the need for international workers' solidarity to defend the miners' union which was and remains the heart of the workers' movement in the region.

The following letter summarises their report and appeal:

Dear Friends,

The situation is very bad for miners throughout the countries of the former Yugoslavia but worst of all in Bosnia. Very briefly, this is our situation.

Twenty thousand miners are employed at mines in middle and northern Bosnia. Of these only 10,000 are actually able to work due to a shortage of personal safety equipment and mining machinery. Many of the unemployed are soldiers who have now been demobilised.

Wages

For four years miners received no wages, only a very rare food parcel. From 1 January, working miners now receive DM70 (£35) a month. Nonworking miners receive DM30 a month. Food prices, etc., are roughly the same as in western Europe.

So-called 'reconstruction funds' from international governments will not include any provision for the welfare of miners or their families.

All co-operation between miners in the different parts of ex-Yugoslavia were disrupted by the war but we are now rebuilding those contacts.

In the past our union has always come to the asssistance of working people in need. Over many years we have given generously to people in Vietnam, South Africa and South America. During the British miners' strike we gave one day's pay a month.

Even now we will not ask for charity but we must tell the truth. Throughout the war our union has fought for the basic principles of trade unionism. Now without international solidary we cannot maintain our union.

We need solidarity and help in three ways:

■ SUPPORT for an independent

We need financial and moral support to maintain a functioning, independent union. Most of the union's property and equipment has either been destroyed or requisitioned during the war so we are left without photocopiers, faxes, telephones, office equipment, etc.

The poverty of our members makes it impossible for us to restore these things so that we can carry out our trade union

activites.

We do not want to be dependent on the government or mine management or on any political or religious group. We need to be accepted into the appropriate European and international trade union organisations.

■ SOLIDARITY with the mining communities.

The war and poverty has not just hurt the miners but also

their families and communitie We need the assistance of work ing people and their trade union to re-equip our schools, hospital clinics, libraries, etc., and t restore a normal human exist

RESTORATION of produc

We need DM1,000 to enabl each non-working miner t return to work (personal safet equipment — boots, overall caps, lamps as well as some mir ing machinery).

Union

Throughout the war our unio has always tried to defend a working people and many of ou members have made great sacr fices in order to maintain th right of all people to live an work together.

We are confident that ou principled defence of basic trad unionism will help us to re-estab lish co-operation between all th miners in Croatia, Bosnia-Herze govina, Serbia, Slovenia an Macedonia who are prepared t respect each others' rights.

To do this we need the asis tance of the working class move ment internationally. We thin you will agree that it is abso lutely normal for trade unionist to respond to the call for solidar

We are sure you will agree that the rebuilding of independ ent trade unions in all the cour tries of ex-Yugoslavia is vital t the interests of workers through out Europe. If you can assist us i any way, please contact Durhar NUM tel 0191-384 3515 or fax u direct on 00 387 75 821 422.

Fikret Sulji Bosnian miners' presider



African Liberation Day Saturday 25 May 1996, 1pm

Max Roach Park, opp Rosary Catholic Church, Brixton Road, London SW9. Nearest tube: Brixton

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! March in solidarity with African workers! Bring your banners!

IMPERIALIST organisations like the IMF and World Bank impose devastating economic policies which cause starvation, civil wars and create refugees.

Multinationals exploit the labour of African workers, and African regimes, in collaboration with Western governments,

arrest, torture and murder work ers, trade unionists and other who fight for democratic right and self-determination.

Despite this, African worker like their comrades in oppresse parts of the world, continue t resist exploitation and stat attacks.

Volunteers please!

A 'situation' has become vacant in the Workers Press dispatch department. Please help! Fridays, 9am-12noon Phone 0171-387 0564

LA truckers follow dockers' lead

THE Liverpool dockers' fight continues to bring other workers' demands in its wake - as far afield as Los Angeles, USA!

Super-exploited Mexican and other Latin American truck drivers have unionised and are now fighting back against conditions where they have to work up to 16 hours a day for just nine hours' pay. Like Kurdish and Turkish workers at JJ Fast Food in north London, they have to pay insurance and repairs on vehicles they don't own.

But since the Liverpool dockers came to town and set up a picket line at the port, thousands of truckers have taken action.

They reduced operations at different terminals at Los Angeles and Long Beach to between 10 and 50 per cent of normal operations on Wednesday 1 May, according to reports from Wall Street Journal staff reporter Frederick Rose. The two ports account for 25 per cent of total container traffic in the US.

'If we burp in Los Angeles,

Support for Liverpool

The following message was sent to the Liverpool dockers from the Iranian Refugee Workers Association general assembly:

Dear comrade, friends and colleagues,

Your struggle is not just defending your jobs and life but it is a win-or-lose struggle for the whole of the working class in Britain and abroad.

We think that the international solidarity action, the refusal to handle freight in the US, Canada, Australia and the raising of solidarity in Sweden, Spain and other dock workers in the world, is important and a source of hope. It needs to spread around the globe, in terms of spirit and finance.

More important and vital is solidarity in Britain from dockers in other ports and workers

you're certainly going to have a

from other industries and unions. It is necessary to find ways to stop the use of scabs.

Ruling class laws, which aim to impose conditions and the lock-out of workers who are the real producers, should be thrown in their faces.

Colleagues, our jobs and lives cannot be secure under capitalism which is based on profit and not the needs of human beings for which we need to build a workers' state.

We support the resolution from the Merseyside Dockers' Port Shop Stewards Committee at the solidarity conference on 27 April. Once again we express our sol-

idarity. Your struggle is ours. Long live international workers' solidarity.

PO Box 3646, London SW11

hiccup in Chicago,' said Jack Kyser, chief economist for the Economic Development Corporation in Los Angeles.

Up to 5,000 truckers were off the job in a complicated series of actions that may sharply and permanently change the nature of the port. A new company says it employs thousands of previously independent truck owner-operators. The Transport Maritime Association Inc. says it plans to 'lease' 4,000 truckers.

If true, this company will have within a few weeks assumed control of the majority of the esti-6,500 independent mated trucking force at the ports.

Along with this the Communi- city-centre rail terminal.

cations Workers of America union has tried to unionise the truckers. If successful this will be another factor changing class relations in the ports.

Transport Maritime says it will pay truckers \$25 an hour and charge shippers \$65 for a driver and a truck, with a minimum of ten hours a day. The \$650-a-day charge is at least double, and in some cases triple, rates charged by independent owner-operators. Bosses say this could move traffic to other West Coast ports.

Truckers have objected for months to pressure from shippers to cut rates on the 25-mile haul from the northern harbour to the

Swedish workers' vow

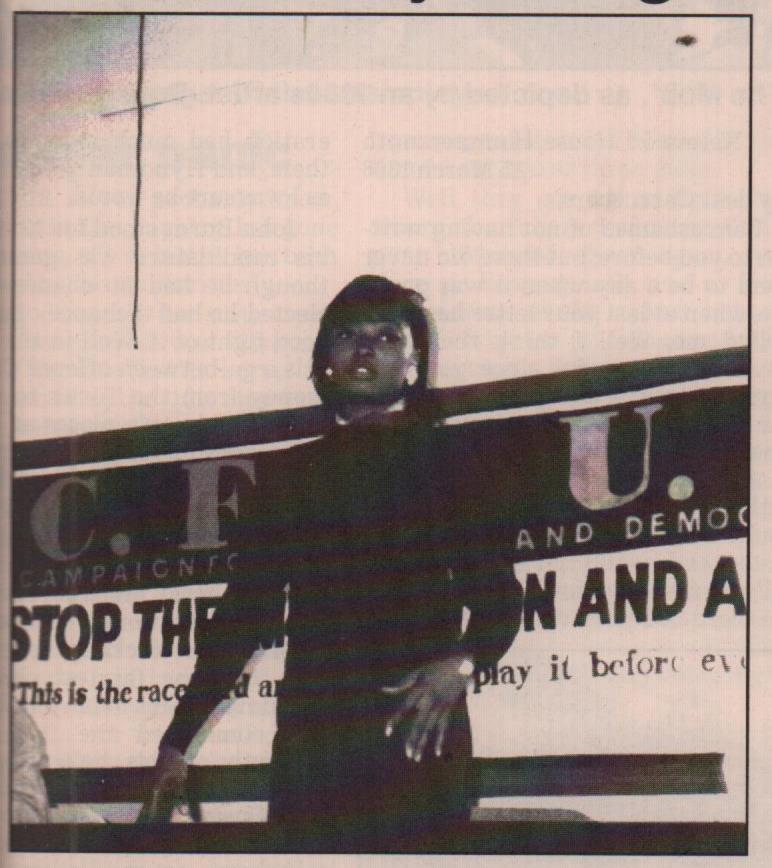
SWEDISH members of SAC, the transport union, who occupied the offices of giant shipping company ACL, say they will visit and revisit these premises and take any other practical action necessary to support the sacked Liverpool dockers.

Lars Hammersberg, who attended the dockworkers' international conference in Liverpool in February, said that police had escorted the 15 men and women occupation from ACL premises, but 'our occupation is a trade union activity and we should not be arrested'.

While in the ACL offices Lars spoke to Mr Riding, the company's top dog in New Jersey, who told the trade unionists that they should not be taking action because his company was 'an innocent victim of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's dispute with the dockworkers'.

'Get your ships out of Liverpool, and tell MDHC to reinstate the sacked dockers,' the Swedish trade unionists told ACL. 'Although we are not dockers, we are organised transport workers and we will boycott your cargoes due for Liverpool.'

The Onibiyos' fight against deportation



Lola Onibiyo at the CFDU conference, 11 May

BY ED HALL

IF the Asylum and Immigration Bill becomes law in July, public service workers in the Unison union will be expected to act as an internal police force, demanding proof of immigration status from users of local services.

Lola Onibiyo, the daughter and sister of two victims of the Britain's racist immigration laws, spoke to a conference of Unison activists organised by the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Unison on 11 May.

Lola's father, Abdul, was deported under existing law to Lagos, Nigeria, and an uncertain fate, on 26 October 1995. Lola's brother, Ade, who has spent more than a year in detention at Campsfield, was deported to Georgetown, Guyana, on 4 May. The British government had been determined to send Ade into the same danger as his father, but he was saved by the generosity of the Guyanese people.

Abdul has not been heard of since the British government deported him. Just before Ade was deported the British government leaked to the Guardian a

supposed Interpol report that Abdul was alive and well in Ibadan, Nigeria. However, all investigations have failed to back up this claim and it is almost certainly bogus — a demonstration of how the Home Office attempts to destabilise campaigns. Just before Abdul's departure, unfounded allegations of benefit fraud were made against him.

Joyce Onibiyo, and her daughters Toro and Yemi, now fear for their future in the city which is their home — London.

The CFDU advocates non-cooperation with the Asylum and Immigration Bill. But the national union's executive is calling for indemnity for those who enact immigration laws but by doing so break the Race Relations Act! This just plays into the government's hands.

■ The Onibiyo Family Anti-Deportation Campaign, which has financed airfares for support for Ade, including his solicitor, needs money.

It plans to set up a fund for Ade as he continues his architectural studies in Georgetown. The campaign can be contacted c/o Lambeth Unison, 6a Acre Lane, London SW2.

Disabled left begging in 'People's' China

BY BILL BOAKES Just back from Beijing

TRAVEL around China, nearly 47 years after Mao Zedong proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic, and it will not be uncommon to see disabled people, young and old begging in the streets of big cities and tourist resorts. You will rarely find these disabled fitted with the artifical limbs or surgical appliances their physical handicaps demand.

The vast majority of adult disabled in China live in a totally inadequate, undignified way, either dependent on their families for sustenance or left to eke out a hand-to-mouth existence on the streets, many bereft of any education or training.

Much of this was admitted at

conference on the disabled, held in Beijing between 22-24 April. State councillor Peng Peiyun revealed that of China's 60 million disabled, only 2.08 million had been provided with physical rehabilitation services in the past five years. (No figures were forthcoming for the preceding 42 years.)

She had begun the conference by declaring that 'one of the marks by which a society's level of civilization is measured is its treatment of its disabled'; but she made no attempt to explain why successive leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and state had done so little for this large disadvantaged group.

Deng Pufang, chair of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, on the other hand, stated that 'despite unprecedented

dition of disabled people still lags behind society's average standard, and disabled people still face many difficulties due to historical factors and the limitation of the country's economic and social development.'

She then went on to reveal that '40 per cent of Chinese disabled remain illiterate, 30 per cent remain jobless, while the everyday food and clothing requirements of 18 million are still not guaranteed.'

A series of steps were announced by councillor Peng Peiyun to 'allocate special funds to develop job opportunities for 15 million poverty-stricken people with disabilities, to ensure that they have enough food and clothing'.

'[T]hree million people will receive rehabilitation services', as (1996-2000) of the State Council's Co-ordinating Committee for the Work of the Disabled.

Also under this plan, according to Peng, 'the legal system will be updated, and social values promoted to uphold understanding, respect, concern and support for the disabled.'

It remains to be seen whether these tardy and relatively insubstantial reforms will be completed and extended to all of the disabled.

It is doubtful if they are likely to recieve the same priority treatment at present being given those scores of returning Chinese multi-millionaires from Hong Kong, who are being encouraged by the state to build their palatial residences, with every possible comfort laid on, in prime tourist centres throughout the People's

Skylarks over Wandsworth

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

I WAS ecstatic to find a skylark nesting in central London, of all places, at the massive land squat in Wandsworth. Some months ago I reported in Workers Press about how these birds were disappearing from the British land-

The Wandsworth site is being occupied by The Land Is Ours who say: 'The best opportunity we've ever had for development that suits us rather than the developers is slipping through our fingers.

'The huge areas of vacant land in our cities, left bare by the wasteful policies of the 1980s, are now being snapped up again by big business — to build superstores, retail warehouses and homes which only the very rich can afford. If we allow this to happen, the best places for community projects and low-cost housing will be lost. Our cities will become even more hostile to human life.

'We must reclaim these critical spaces for ourselves. It is time to put development back into the hands of the community, so that it works for us, not against us. Right now and here hundreds of activists from all over the country are showing how.

'We have taken over a large area of derelict land in London, to build a sustainable village, with gardens, farms and community projects.

'The first part of the occupation is being used as a demonstration project; after that the land will be left in the hands of people who want to live there. The occupation started exactly 50 years after the beginning of the biggest squat in history — the May 1946 take-over of more than 1,000 sites around the country. (When exservice men took over army camps and luxury hotels).

'The Land Is Ours is a campaign, not an organisation. It has no paid staff and no hierarchy. In other words, it's up to you to shape this occupation and make it deliver what you want.'

The occupation started on 5 May and within days hundreds of people had contributed to constructing buildings and gardens. Visitors are made welcome and programmes of entertainment are being provided. When we visited we were invited to join a wild life ramble and enjoy some street theatre.

So far the occupation has met no problems from the police who acknowledge that it is a civil, not criminal matter.

Local residents are strongly supportive and have joined in they oppose the plans of the owners Guinness who want to build a Safeways supermarket and 110 yuppie flats on the site. However Guinness are not so pleased and are threatening eviction.

The campaigners are hoping that they can embarrass them into backing down — but the response has been predictable: 'We have to look after the interests of our shareholders.'

The local Tory council are very hostile too.

Derelict

The Land Is Ours point out that '5 per cent of the urban area of Britain is derelict. London alone has an area of vacant land the size of the Borough of Westminster.

'Its neglect and misuse is a blight on our lives. Britain's housing crisis can hardly be exaggerated. We need 90 to 120,000 new affordable homes every year, yet only 30 to 40,000 are being built. This means that more and more of the population will be homeless or underhoused.'

Their campaign is a superb example of how large numbers of people can be rapidly mobilised over a major political issue that the bourgeois political parties will not and cannot address.

They deserve our fullest support.

The 13 acre former distillery site is at the junction of York Road and Bridge End Road (extension of Wandsworth Bridge). Visitors are very welcome and are encouraged to join in. Just turn up!

The organisers have a brilliant internet site at http://www.globalnet.co.uk/~weaver/index.html where there is daily updated news, background information, maps, pictures and even downloadable videos and sound clips.

Workers Press — May/June lectures **MARXISM AND THE HISTORY** OF THE BRITISH **WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT**

Some lessons for today By Geoff Pilling, Workers Press editorial board

Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road, London. Thursdays 23 May and 6 & 20 June, 7.30pm. Nearest tube King's Cross

The 'historical decisive turning point' for the workers' movement of Chartism, was the subject of the first lecture by Geoff Pilling in this series, given on Thursday 9 May. Pilling stressed the implications of this 19th century

struggle for the movement today. Following the lectures a set of notes and a reading list was dis-

Karl Marx and the British trade union movement (23 May), Marx and the struggle against sectarianism in the labour movement (6 June) and Frederick Engels and the foundation of the Second International (20 June).

tributed to participants. Further

lectures will cover:

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE **WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International) Please send me information about the WRP date Name Address

Send to: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

Inside left

aloney 'Mahoney

TER equivocation, trying to equate aeli colonialism and Arab resistce, and strictures against 'politics trapolated from the last atrocity', orkers Liberty (May 1996) conmns Israeli aggression in Lebanon.

We say that the Palestinians should ve full independence, without aeli interference, in the areas here they are the majority — now!, editorial says. Would that include its of Galilee (which the PLO is not manding)? Or exclude East rusalem, which Palestinians rightly im as their capital? Apparently w! means 'when the Israeli government deems it right'.

The peace accord that gave limited tonomy to Palestinian Arabs may, if survives, develop into full self-government.... That is the best chance.' So like Israeli settlements enfold rusalem, Palestinians must behave, d be thankful for what they get.

Peres's government might claim it ted to secure the real interests of th Jews and Arabs' by safeguarding electoral prospects and the 'peace ocess', the editorial sighs: 'A terrible nment on the state of our world... increase its chance of winning an

ction in the only democracy in the ole region, . . . a government feels iged to unleash the most savage struction.'

It's a Labour government. Its ression was backed by Clinton, and tillo, without any criticism from tish Labour leaders. Perhaps rkers Liberty, clinging to its niche

the Labour Party and the National ion of Students, feels safer piously nenting 'the state of our world' than appling with such details.

Adam Keller, an Israeli who isn't aid of confronting his government, es: 'As a resistance movement uggling to liberate occupied banese territory, Hizbollah gained port also from many Lebanese odo not share its militant Islamic ology.' He says Hizbollah has erged stronger, whereas more aelis admit they will have to with-tw from Lebanon.

But a Workers Liberty 'briefing', a crude Zionist handout, exoners Israel for the 1947-49 flight of estinian refugees, and completely as the 1982 Lebanon war! And John Lahoney, purporting to 'review' the thinder Press pamphlet Leon at the Jewish Question, prods to smear all anti-Zionists as i-Semites.

Any socialist critique of Zionism, or cussion of its relation to antimitism, is taboo. Claiming 'wide layof the Trotskyist left' hold 'crazy' as about a 'Jewish conspiracy' nipulating Hitler, O'Mahoney cites dite, albeit crazy, books by Lennimer' and 'the original version of Allen's play *Perdition*'. This saly distorts what either author We will reserve judgement on is 'crazy'.

rejudices

T-wing sympathy for Bosnia ed as it is largely upon atrocity ies in the bourgeois press is misceived, says Al Richardson, in a publication called Results and spects (RAP). Some of the hate paganda directed against the bs, obviously aimed at bourgeois inist prejudices, that they have ulged in rape as part of a deliberplan . . . has been proved to be rue.

workers Aid for Bosnia was largely bired by a Serb Trotskyist. hardson offers no source for his rtions; nor any evidence that he read anything, or listened to anyfrom former Yugoslavia. His idiced attitude to feminists, and ctance to hear anything that sort fit his prejudices, aren't news. Lev're to be aired in print, the jourshould be called CRAP; or RAPE.

Charlie Pottins

Letter from William Morris

'The dry bones a

Various people, from Hammersmith Trades Council to the Victoria and Albert Museum, are holding events this year to mark the centenary of the death of the socialist poet, writer, artist and designer William Morris.

Morris, who came from a fairly well-to-do middle class family in Walthamstow, east London, showed some rebellion while at school. But it was his reaction to the way commercialism degraded art and craftsmanship, as well as his opposition to jingoist foreign policies, that led him to embrace the cause of socialism and the working class.

In 1884, Morris left H.M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation and with Fredrick Engels and Eleanor Marx among others, formed the Socialist League. This letter, written in 1886 to a friend who had gone to Venezuela, gives an interesting snapshot of socialist activity in stormy times.

The following year, 1887, after mounted police violently broke up an unemployed rally in Trafalgar Square, on what became known as 'Bloody Sunday', Morris was one of the founders, with Hyndman, journalist W.T. Stead, Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, of the Law and Liberty League, a civil rights campaign.

Police attacking another demonstration killed a passing office worker, Alfred Linnel. Morris was one of the pallbearers at Linnel's funeral, when 120,000 people followed the coffin. A poem he wrote, with illustrations by Walter Crane, was sold in aid of Linnel's family.

In contrast to Hyndman, who affected a lofty sectarian indifference, Morris shared Engels's enthusiasm for the great 1889 dock strike, writing that the dockers had struck a blow not only against the employers but against reactionary divisions within the working class, by showing how well they could organise. He recognised in workers' solidarity the basis for a future society.

'The dockers have won their victory,' he wrote, 'for with all drawbacks it must be called a victory. They have shown qualities of unselfishness and power of combination which we may well hope will appear again before long.'

Morris' utopian novel *News from Nowhere* first came out in 1890 in the Socialist League's paper the *Commonweal*, and was published in book form the following year. It imagined a future London, freed of exploitation, alienation, pollution and poverty. It has been called a charming romance.

But after what he had seen in the 1880s, Morris was not entirely naïve. The novel's hero asks how the change came about, whether it was peaceful. 'How could it be?' comes the reply; the dreamt-of peaceful future comes from escalating class struggle.



'The Mob', as depicted by an 1880s artist. Bourgeois London w

Kelmscott House, Hammersmith 25 March 1886

My dear Carruthers,

I am ashamed of not having written to you before; but there did never seem to be a day when it was possible, when at last your letter has compelled me. Well I think the times have been eventful since you left; First there was the general election the results of which of course you know in general.

As to us of the League the election rather flattened us down: people could only see two parties while it lasted, and would not listen to us at all: our meetings fell off, and in fact we were in a poor way. But the Fed-

eration had much more to do with them, and Hyndman got into a mess, as I was sure he would.

John Burns stood for Nottingham: his candidature was genuine, and though he had no chance of being elected he had a chance of making a good fight of it. Well in the midst of this a go-between offered Champion money from the Tories to put up a candidate in two places at least: the same were of course only to 'make running' for the Tory candidates.

Hyndman couldn't resist this and so J.E. Williams stood for Hampstead and Fielding for Bermondsey (I think it was) and moreover there was a Federationist named Parker standing for Hackney: none of these men had the faintest chance; but Hyndman seems to have lost his head and committed the folly on the strength of this help of going to Chamberlain and threatening him with Socialist opposition to the Liberal candidates (John Bright at Birmingham among others) if he, Chamberlain, did not promise to support an eight hours bill in the forthcoming house.

Well, of course Chamberlain showed him the door; also the whole thing got about and offended the Radicals mortally, and injured such chances as Burns had at Nottingham. Moreover many of the members of the SDF were much displeased, as the whole transaction had been done over their heads. The result was that Burns was badly beaten at Nottingham, got about 560 votes, and the others were absurdly beaten, only polling some 50 votes amidst the teehees of the Bourgeois press.

The socialists generally were much discredited, and there has been a split in the Federation, some of the branches remaining independent, one joining us, and some members setting up a new organisation under the name of the Socialist Union: which latter I don't think will do much.



William Morris (fourth from right, centre row) with Hammersmith Socialist League branch on an outing to Epping Forest

Workers Press Saturday 18 May 1996 PAGE 5

Letter from William Morris

re certainly stirring'



s terrified by the anger of the unemployed

A regular panic

MEANTIME, as you probably know, the distress in this country has gone on increasing, till at last it has been recognised by the 'authorities'.

Making demands for state work for the unemployed was always a cheval de bataille [battle horse] for the SDF and after the split they went into this matter with special ardour, partly no doubt to try to recover the ground they had lost by this election intrigue: a few days before 8 February they had an excited meeting at Holborn Town Hall, where it was determined to meet again and take fresh action.

For amidst all this a set of discredited tenth-rate politicians had been (backed up by Tory money) busy in making capital for the so-called Fair Traders out of this unemployed business; they called a meeting for 8 February in Trafalgar Square and the SDF determined to try and take the meeting from them: we determined to take no part officially in what seemed likely to be a mere faction fight; though many of our members went there.

The meeting came off, and was very big, the people were clearly very much excited. The SDF completely beat the Fair Traders, and Hyndman, Williams and specially Burns spoke in their usual way—not over wisely I fear. One or two of our people also spoke. As far as the speeches went they were (as I hear, for I wasn't there) of the usual type. However the result was widely different from the usual—nothing to wit.

Burns and the others led the mob up to Hyde Park, doubtless meaning nothing more than an ordinary demonstration by it. All went well till they got to the Carlton, where they stopped to hoot, and where some fools in the windows fell to jeering them. This led to stoning the windows, and the crowd got quite

unmanageable and in Piccadilly they turned out two or three shops.

Well they got up to Hyde Park where the others including Champion addressed them again, bade them go home quietly and so forth. There some of the crowd behaved very ill frightening old ladies, upsetting carriages and the like, but the more part seem to have listened quietly.

And so the Socialist leaders went home. But meantime a return wave of the crowd went back from Hyde Park down Audley Street where they broke nearly all the windows and so into Oxford Street where they sacked several shops (as also in Audley Street) and broke much plateglass (my own, 449, only escaping by about half a minute).

Well this was all the rioting but the next day and the next, foggy dreary weather by the way, the shopkeepers and others had a regular panic, and behaved as though London were on the point of being taken by storm: nothing can be conceived more absurd than their cowardice: all sorts of 'shaves' flying about, and the police bidding people in King Street, Hammersmith, to put up their shutters, people in Kilburn even shutting up.

The only foundation for this was that no doubt the East End was excited and if it had been anybody's business to do so a dozen eager resolute men could have got up a very serious riot. As it was people were far more frightened than hurt.

The next Sunday the SDF held a very orderly meeting in Hyde Park attended by 50 to 60,000 people. But the police behaved very ill and did their best to get up a row, the mounted ones charging the people who were there merely as spectators.

Next act was the arrest of the leaders and after a wearisome time before the Bow Street magistrate in which I assisted as bail for Burns and Williams (Bax bailing Champion,



William Morris's birthplace in Walthamstow, now part of Lloyd Park, where Waltham Forest TUC's May Day festivities are held

and Joseph Cowen, Hyndman) they were committed for trial which comes off on 5 April. Burns and Hyndman will I think be cast, Champion probably not and Williams certainly not.

Well this matter has rather drawn us and the Federation together, though some of us hardly approve of their defending themselves by law quibbles.

For the rest, contemptible as the riot was, as a riot, it no doubt has had a great effect, both here and on the continent: in fact the surprise of people in finding that the British workman will not stand everything is extreme. As for the League we are out of it at present: but the times seem to me both hopeful and rough; I fancy there will be another attempt on our meetings this summer and I rather expect to learn one more new craft — oakum-picking to wit, though I don't want to — far from it.

Socialist League

THE League itself is going on pretty well; our branch is much livelier than it was and our meetings have been well attended through the winter.

We are going to make the rash venture of publishing the Common-weal. I cannot say that I am sanguine as to its success as a selling paper, though I think we shall make it a

good one. However our people would have it, and it certainly will wake them up a bit.

On 18 March we had a meeting in Commemoration of the Commune at South Place: that was a great success, the place crowded. Kropotkin new come from prison spoke, and I made his acquaintance there: I like him very much: had a long talk with him yesterday evening at a gathering of the SDF. So you see as far as meeting goes the old quarrel is patched up.

I have been out and about lectur-

ing: and am going to Dublin a fortnight. The Irish matter is hanging in the wind by the by very queerly. Our statesmen fairly don't know what to do; would be glad to be able to say yes and no at the same time.

As for Socialism I must say that in spite of all faults and follies of the party I am encouraged about the movement. The dry bones are certainly stirring.

(from a letter written by William Morris to John Carruthers in Venezuela)

Some people mentioned:

John BURNS (1858-1943) engineer, member Amalgamated Society of Engineers and TUC. Helped organise 1889 dock strike. Elected MP for Battersea 1892, member of Liberal cabinet 1905, but resigned 1914 because of war.

Joseph CHAMBERLAIN (1836-1914) Birmingham mayor and MP, initially Radical who promoted municipal reforms, he moved to the right over Ireland, colonialism and protection, becoming leader in 1891 of Liberal Unionists, who became part of Tory party. Colonial Secretary 1895-1903.

Henry Mayers HYNDMAN (1842-1921) Founded Democratic Federation which became Social Democratic Federation in 1884. Regarded himself as English Marxist, but neither Marx, Engels nor many others could stand his sectarianism and chauvinism.

Prince Peter KROPOTKIN (1842-1921) Russian geographer and anarchist, escaped from Tsarist police to exile in Britain. Returned to Russia after 1917 Revolution.

Don't forget the Commune!

HERE is a brief extract from the otherwise excellent editorial in last week's 500th issue of Workers Press:

'It was capitalism . . . that . . . for the first time laid the basis for a classless society. The first breakthrough towards that society came with the revolution of 1917.

What a pity that, in the course of showing quite correctly that Arthur Scargill 'has learned nothing from history', our paper forgets that the 1917 Russian Revolution was the second, not the first, breakthrough towards a classless society.

The first such breakthrough was of course the Paris Commune of 1871, when the working class 'stormed heaven', as Karl Marx put it, and ruled Paris from 18 March to 21 May — until the Versailles government's troops smashed through the barricades and savagely butchered thousands of the Commune's defend-

In 1996 it's all too easy to forget the Paris Commune, whose brief beacon was for so long outshone and obscured by the October Revolution in Russia 46 years later, and by the Soviet Union that claimed to be 'the socialist sixth of the world'.

Now that the Soviet Union is no more, it behoves us to see with clear eyes, and in proper perspective, both of these two historic attempts by the working class at breaking through to a classless society.

And without the distortions and dazzlements engendered by Stalinism, what a treasure-house of working-class experience the Commune proves to be.

It's not hard to see why Lenin and Trotsky, in the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution, used the Commune as a yardstick or touchstone of their own achievements — in particular, after they had surpassed its 70 days in power, telling each other: 'Today we are at Commune plus one!

Nor is it hard to see why, when the Soviet government moved to Moscow in 1918, and the Petrograd Labour Commune was established, the Petrograd workers were 'enthralled'.

'We were not only continuators of the great Communards, we ourselves were Communards', wrote A.F. Ilyin-Zhenevsky in his reminiscences (The Bolsheviks in Power, trans. Brian Pearce, New Park, 1984). 'It made one feel dizzy to think of it, and raised one's spirits to an unheard-of degree.'

To be sure, not everything we have generally believed about the Paris Commune turns out to be well founded. In particular, it is not the case that all the Commune's officials were paid skilled workers' wages; some were paid more — though certainly much was done to scale down gross inequalities.

Perhaps we have Marx to thank to some extent for this incrustation of legend over the historical facts.

Soon after Marx's death Engels admitted to Eduard Bernstein that Marx, in The Civil War in France (1871), had 'improved the unconscious tendencies of the Commune into more or less conscious projects', though this improvement had, Engels added, been 'justified, even necessary, in

the circumstances'.

Those circumstances, we should bear in mind, included an unprecedentedly venomous slander campaign in the bourgeois press all over Europe, vilifying the Commune and its supporters, and in large part based on impu-

dent forgeries. One hundred and twenty-five years later, we have no need of myths, proletarian or otherwise. The Commune's record speaks for itself, not least in the extraordinary degree of local autonomy that was exercised by the workers of the various arrondissements, and in the prominent part played by women in every sphere

of activity. The Commune abolished the standing army. It took over the factories abandoned by their owners. It did away with the detested night work of bakers,

COLUMN

service workers, and entertainers.

It transformed education. Religious images were removed from the schools and secular education — which the bourgeois republic afterwards took 30 years to achieve — was accomplished in one stroke.

Provision of free school meals and free clothing was proposed independently by two workingclass districts and put in force there long before the Commune's Education Commission had issued a single decree.

Not least, art, music and the theatre flourished under the Commune, and theatres deserted by their managements were kept open by their actors.

In these and in many other ways, the Paris Commune was exactly what Marx called it: 'the glorious harbinger of a new society.' It gave us much to admire, much to think about, and much to emulate.

Birth of the blues

I ENJOYED immensely Geoff Barr's review last week of Ted Vincent's Keep Cool: The Black Activists Who Built the Jazz

Not only did I learn much from it, I found that it passed the acid test of a book review - it made me want to get hold of the book and read it as soon as possi-

But Geoff has one sentence that I'm compelled to join issue with: 'Even the "rural" blues came out of a small area of about a dozen counties in Arkansas and Mississippi.'

Whether this is Geoff's own view or that of the book under review is unclear; but there is considerable evidence - an important part of it contemporary - pointing to a much wider simultaneous emergence of the blues form, around the turn of the century, in parts of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia, as well as the two states that Geoff names.

The most archaic-sounding blues known to me, for instance, are those of the itinerant Texas musician Henry Thomas, who plays the quills (panpipes), that ancient forerunner of the mouthorgan, in some of his 1920s recordings of songs all redolent of the 19th century.

'Country blues', in other words, seem to have developed out of unaccompanied field songs by polygenesis rather than by diffusion from one single area of origin.

I think I could demonstrate this to Geoff's satisfaction with recordings from my own collection and will, if he likes, gladly make him a tape as soon as I get the time.

Happy birthday, John!

I ADD my voice to the chorus of congratulations to John Robinson on his 70th birthday, which he celebrates today.

One of John's great strengths is that, without fuss or ostentation, he does his share and more of the humdrum everyday tasks involved in building a movement

and distributing its paper. No doubt because of its forthright subtitle, his book The Individual and Society: A Marxist Approach to Human Psychology (Index Academic Books, 1993) has not attracted the critical attention it deserves.

Unfazed by this literary editors' oblique tribute, John is steadily pressing on, I gather, with a further contribution in the same field. More power to his elbow, and to his pen!

PERSONAL General Strike betrayed BY MIKE COOKE SEVENTY years ago the General Strike - which began on Monday 3 May 1926 in support of

locked-out miners — was defeated by the TUC general council's betrayal of the movement it was supposed to repre-For nine days the strike against the mine owners' demands for more profits and

thereby for lower wages and longer hours for mineworkers had been growing and looked set to grow further. The first wave on 3 May involved transport, printing, iron and steel, metal and heavy chemicals workers. From 10 May engineering and shipyard workers joined the struggle.

sent.

But on the evening of 12 May a general council statement issued to affiliated societies said: 'The general council, through the magnificent support and solidarity of the trade union movement, has obtained assurances that a settlement of the mining problem can be secured which justifies them in bringing the general stoppage to an end.'

These 'assurances' were from Sir Herbert Samuel, the chair of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry set up after 'Red Friday' 31 July 1925 nine months before. Lock-out notices from mine owners were delayed by the government agreeing to subsidise the industry. With the end of the subsidy the owners sent out renewed lock-out notices due to

Two days later the prime minister outlined his different proposals. But already by then the government had made it clear that they would not compel employers to take back workers that had participated in the General Strike. It further said that such dismissals would be inevitable due to loss of production and the obligations incurred by volunteer labour — in other words scabs were to permanently replace trade union workers. No subsidy was forthcoming.

The vast majority of the strikers continued their action to Friday 14 May but, given the confusion caused by the general council, it was inevitable that defeat would ensue and that workers would return to work. Alone, the miners struggled against the lock-out for another seven months.

Hundreds of thousands of workers were victimised and lost jobs, thousands were arrested and hundreds were imprisoned for their activities. Many of these unemployed workers were refused the dole on the grounds that they weren't genuinely seeking work.

Meanwhile Labour MPs complained about 'unfounded, inacprovocative and curate

the most important question of state policy. Thanks to the betrayal of the leadership, the strike was broken in its first stage. It was a great illusion to continue in the belief that an isolated economic strike of the mine workers would alone achieve what the General Strike did not achieve. That is precisely where the power of the general council lay. It aimed with cold calculation at the defeat of the mine workers, as a result of which considerable sections of the workers would be convinced of the "correctness" and the "reasonableness" of the Judas directives of the general council' (in The Third International after Lenin, New Park, 1974).

Trotsky's critique was written from internal exile in Alma Ata, June 1928 to the sixth congress of the Communist International.

While Communist Party members in Britain gave magnificent and self-sacrificing support to the strike and formed its most determined battalions, Trotsky was particularly critical of the Comintern leadership and in particular its bloc with the TUC general council through an 'Anglo-Russian' committee of trade union leaders:

'The maintenance of the ami-

direct struggle against the general council, the agency of the government and the mine own-

'The struggle to convert the economic strike into a political strike should have signified, therefore, a furious political and organisational war against the general council. The first step to such a war had to be the break with the Anglo-Russian committee, which had become a reactionary obstacle, a chain on the feet of the working class.

'No revolutionist who weighs his words will contend that a victory would have been guaranteed by proceeding along this line. But victory was possible only on this road. A defeat on this road was a defeat on a road that could lead later to victory. Such a defeat educates, that is, strengthens the revolutionary ideas in the work-

ing class. 'In the meantime, mere financial support of the lingering and hopeless trade union strike (trade union strike - in its methods; revolutionary-political - in its aims), only meant grist to the mill of the general council, which was biding calmly until the strike collapsed from starvation and thereby proved its own "correctness".

'Of course, the general council could not easily bide its time for several months in the role of an open strike-breaker. It was precisely during this very critical period that the general council required the Anglo-Russian committee as its political screen from the masses.

Questions

'Thus, the questions of the mortal class struggle between British capital and the proletariat, between the general council and the mineworkers, were transformed, as it were, into questions of a friendly discussion between allies in the same bloc, the British general council and the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, on the subject of which of the two roads was better at that moment: the road of agreement, or the road of an isolated economic struggle.

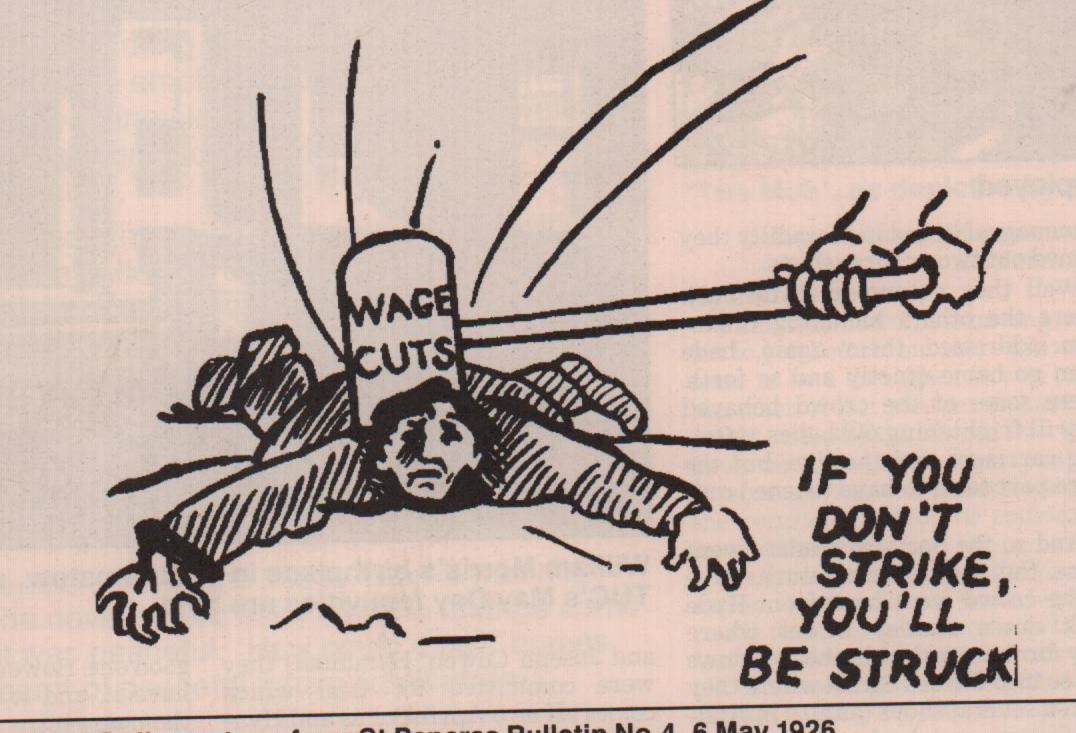
'The inevitable outcome of the strike led to the agreement, that is, tragically settled the friendly "discussion" in favour of the general council.

'From beginning to end, the entire policy of the Anglo-Russian committee, because of its false line, provided only aid to the general council. Even the fact that the strike was long sustained financially by the great self-sacrifice on the part of the Russian working class, did not serve the mine workers or the British Communist Party, but the self-same general council.

'As the upshot of the greates revolutionary movement in Brit ain since the days of Chartism the British Communist Party ha hardly grown while the genera council sits in the saddle ever more firmly than before the Gen eral Strike.'

On top of these mistake caused by the Stalinist degenera tion of the Russian leadership against which Trotsky was fight ing, the central slogan of the Brit ish Communist Party had been 'All power to the general council This sick parody of the 1917 Bo. shevik slogan - 'All power to th soviets' - added its weigh behind the general counc betraval.

In 1917 the Russian soviets ha been under the control of th masses and led to the Octobe Revolution and a victory for th working class. By contrast, in 195 the TUC general council wa under the boot of the ruling cla and helped maintain bourgeo power.



General Strike cartoon from St Pancras Bulletin No.4, 6 May 1926

take effect from 30 April. But Samuel's proposals had been rejected on 11 May by miners' leaders, both in person by their chair Herbert Smith and by resolution of the miners' executive committee. On 12 May the general secretary, A.J. Cook sent a telegram to all districts of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain saying 'miners must not resume work pending decision of national conference.'

But not only were the proposals rejected by the miners, they had no force, as admitted by Samuel himself in a letter to the general council chair Arthur Pugh on 12 May: 'I have made it clear to your committee from the outset that I have been acting entirely on my own initiative, have received no authority from the government, and can give no assurances on their behalf.'

Pugh and TUC acting secretary Walter M. Citrine replied for the general council by saying it was 'taking the necessary measures to terminate the General Strike, relying upon the public assurances of the prime minister as to the steps that would follow. They assume that during the resumed negotiations the subsidy will be renewed and that the lock-out notices to the miners will be immediately withdrawn.'

statements that the general council had unconditionally surrendered.'

Trotsky's assessment was somewhat different in his critique of the draft programme of the Comintern: 'The transition of the mass movement into the open revolutionary stage threw back into the camp of the bourgeois reaction those liberal labour politicians who had become somewhat Left. They betrayed the General Strike openly and deliberately; after which they undermined and betrayed the miners' strike.

'The possibility of betrayal is always contained in reformism. But this does not mean to say that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Not quite. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists whenever they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when, frightened by the development of a movement, they commit treason, is equivalent to criminal toleration of traitors and a veiling of betrayal.

'The general strike had the task of exerting a united pressure upon the employers and the state with the power of the 5 million workers, for the question of the coal mining industry had become

cable bloc with the general council, and the simultaneous support of the protracted and isolated economic strike of the mine workers, which the general council came out against, seemed as it were calculated beforehand to allow the heads of the trade unions to emerge from this heaviest test with the least possible losses. 'The role of the Russian trade

unions here, from the revolutionary standpoint, turned out to be very disadvantageous and positively pitiable. 'Certainly, support of an economic strike, even an isolated one, was absolutely necessary.

There can be no two opinions on that among revolutionists. But this support should have borne not only a financial but also a revolutionary-political charac-

ter. 'The All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions should have declared openly to the British mine workers' union and the whole British working class that the mine workers' strike could seriously count upon success only if by its stubbornness, its tenacity, and its scope, it could prepare the way for a new outbreak of the

general strike. 'That could have been achieved only by an open and

We are going to have Science focus A monthly column by Daniel Robertson, principal scientist at a leading bio-technology company WITH the death of the Welfare our Beveridge!'

State declared by the Labour Party last week in a speech by the shadow social security spokesperson Chris Smith to the Institute for Public Policy Research, we look back to the conditions in which it was set up.

During World War II workers made great sacrifices and were demanding better conditions. A.J.P. Taylor reports: 'Between mid-1943 and the landing in France on 6 June 1944 there were as many strikes as in the worst period of the first war. The Communist shop stewards could not stop them. Prosecutions of so-called Trotskyites by the ministry of labour were equally ineffective' (English History, 1914-1945, Oxford, 1965).

Under such pressure Sir William Beveridge's plan for universal social security was worked out. Beveridge, a Liberal, rejected a social security pro-

vided by society and opted for 'National Insurance'.

'He took over the principle of flat-rate contributions, which Lloyd George had unwillingly accepted in 1911, and so perpetuated, seemingly for ever, the retrograde principle of the poll-tax, against which Englishmen had revolted as long ago as 1381,' says Taylor.

Even so the Beveridge report seemed a great advance. In February 1943 the government gave it only faint blessing.

'Labour demanded more and



Sir William Beveridge

revolted for the only time in the war. An amendment demanding stronger approval was defeated by 338 to 121. With two exceptions all Labour members not in office voted for the amendment.

'There was fresh pressure in the autumn. A new party, Commonwealth, came into existence on an idealistic socialist programme and won three by-elections. Some gesture had to be made....

They Knew Why They Fought by Bill Hunter

Unofficial Struggles & Leadership on the Docks 1945-1989 Available from Index Books (0171-274 8342). Price £7.95

A convenor's diary

During World War II Trotskyist BILL HUNTER wrote a 'Convenor's Diary' in the Independent Labour Party's paper the New Leader. In one issue he reported on an incident in the factory where he worked. We quote with permission from Hunter's autobiography Life-long Apprenticeship, The Life and Times of a Revolutionary, Vol.1, 1920-1959, which is due out in October, available from Index Books (0171-636 3532).

THE general desire for change from the prewar conditions is shown in one report to a speaker in the canteen one dinner time.

We occasionally had these speakers, usually putting out propaganda from government ministries, who did not get the best of attention. This time, however, the 'Diary' tells:

'Friday: In the canteen at dinner time there was a propagandist for the Home Nursing Scheme. He was explaining its value and somehow managed to link it with social security and the Beveridge Report. "We are going to have our Beveridge," he

'There was a loud burst of clapping and banging of tables at this. A director was seen to take the personnel manager aside and agitatedly talk to him. It seemed he was chastising him for allowing "propaganda" in the canteen!

On the day that the Beveridge Report was published, I might add, a queue a mile long formed outside the government bookshop in central London. Within

three hours 70,000 copied were sold. Two weeks later the British Institute of Public Opinion published a survey which showed that 95 per cent of the public had heard of the report with 88 per cent in favour, 6 per cent against and 6 per cent undecided.

The scene in the canteen with the workers applauding and the director getting agitated was a microcosm of British society.

'Churchill and his party were at one in the prime minister's assessment of Beveridge as "an awful windbag and dreamer".

'As a result of the government's refusal to contemplate immediate legislation to implement the Beveridge Report, the vote on the Labour amendment against the government produced the largest anti-government vote of the war.

'In the end, the government stalled any legislation on Beveridge for the remainder of the war' (Thinking the Unthinkable, Think-tanks and the economic counter-revolution, 1931-1983, Richard Cockett, Fontana, p.62).

principal scientist at a leading bio-technology company

Old habits die hard

ATTEMPTS to decommission US stocks of chemical warfare agents have already been reported in this column some months ago.

A similar nightmare has recently come to light in Russia and the bureaucracy is doing its best to suppress the news.

The Bellona Foundation is an organisation of Russian and Norwegian environmentalists concerned with hazards posed by the rotting Russian nuclear submarine Northern Fleet.

Towards the end of 1995 the Yeltsin government decided to get tough with environmental activists across Russia — scores were arrested. The Bellona office in Murmansk was raided and files stolen.

The most sinister development has been the arrest of activist Alexandr Nikitin, the co-author of The Russian Northern Fleet — Sources of Radioactive Contamination, which has just been published by Bellona. Nikitin has been accused of treason, a charge which carries the death penalty.

The Russian constitution states that it is forbidden to keep secret information related to circumstances which may damage health or the environment. But this is being ignored and charges of infringing on state secrets are being made.

Nikitin denies this and insists that all of this material is available elsewhere. This is just the bureaucracy flexing its muscles.

The book makes amazing reading. Nikitin trained as a specialist on nuclear reactors at the Russian Navy Academy and knows his stuff. It covers the development of the Soviet nuclear fleet, reactor types, radioactive waste handling, naval yard radioactive facilities. decommissioning, nuclear accidents and sunk submarines.

An account is given of other countries' nuclear fleets. Even India is building an attack nuclear submarine - what a criminal waste of resources!

I remember enjoying a boat trip around the yards at Murmansk some years ago and wondering about the rusting hulks we were passing. These decomposing vessels and the nearby radioactive waste storage facilities pose a considerable health threat to local people who are being kept firmly in the dark.

There are hundreds of nuclear objects in the Murmansk area. and these are precipitating a growing environmental disaster. Nikitin should be congratulated for his courage in giving local people the information they need to defend their health and safety.

We are all under threat from military secrecy — there are no international agreements on inspection of dangerous wastes

from military activity. Is a yeast like

a man? A MILESTONE in molecular biology has just been achieved —

the complete sequencing of the yeast genome. This means the complete DNA sequence governing yeast genetics is now known. Yeast is important as it is the

main micro-organism used in industry as well as being an ideal model for investigations into the nature of life. Great progress in understanding the biology of yeasts will result.

But dangers are also posed by this success. The Yeast Genome Project is paralleled by the Human Genome Project which seeks to identify the complete sequence of human DNA. This is already resulting in breakthroughs in understanding a

range of genetically-based dis-

However early successes here are fuelling the great mistaken paradigm of modern biology genetic reductionism. This is the belief that biology can be totally 'explained' from DNA sequences. No doubt for an organism as simple as a yeast this is largely (but not totally) true.

Some scientists claim that this is also true for humans with assertions that human behaviour is largely biological and explicable by genetics.

There are two dangers. First, reactionary governments will use these claims to assert that social problems are due to genetics and are thus not amenable to resolution. Explaining human social behaviour through genetics is like claiming that the laws of chemistry can be deduced from quantum mechanics. It is complete nonsense!

The second danger is that where aspects of human biology that impinge on social behaviour can be identified — for instance if there were any genetic links between human intelligence or sexual orientation — the possibility of eugenics would then be raised. This means culling foetuses or even infants to eliminate supposed 'undesirable' features.

Professor Robert Plomin at the Maudsley Hospital in London exemplifies the dangers. He wants to identify the genes that determine performance in IQ tests.

There are a range of problems here. The balance between environment and genetics in determining 'IQ' is unclear, although as explained in previous articles there is plenty of evidence that the social environment has a very profound effect.

It may well be possible that some 'IQ' can be attributed to a range of genes. But what will that really determine? Is performance in IQ tests really a measure of human potential?

On the other hand there are enough people who will attach enormous significance to any genes that can influence the outcome of IQ testing. This will have unpredictable but profound social consequences.

Irresponsible scientists claim that their research is value-free, that it is up to society to make of it what it might. The reality is that science is never pursued in a vacuum, there is often a hidden agenda. Socially responsible scientists must expose these hidden agendas.

Euthanasia

IN ADDITION to the possibility of eugenics raised above, how serious is the danger of humans being eliminated because their survival is inconvenient to soci-

The answer to this terrible question is being given by the world's fastest growing capitalist economy — the Peoples Republic of China! The Chinese government is about to introduce legislation to legalise euthanasia, described there as 'tranquil death'.

The victims will be the sick and elderly. As the old welfare system is dismantled the pressure is on to eliminate those who are a burden to China's new market economy.

In a society where profit is the only criterion, health care is being rapidly privatised at a speed that would bring tears of joy to Thatcher's eyes — and the prospect of early termination to China's elderly.

It is fascinating that the future of capitalism can be seen clearest in capitalism's newest recruit. But I bet that China's leadership, who seem to be mostly in their 90s, will be escaping 'tranquil death'.

The Bellona Nikitin campaign page on the internet is http://www.grida.no/ngo/bellona/nikitin.htm with updated information. The complete text of Nikitin's book can also be downloaded.

'Comrade Artur was a warrior'

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

TRIBUTE was paid in London last Sunday to a Jewish workers' leader from Poland who took his life on 12 May 1943, in anguish at world governments' indifference as the Warsaw ghetto was crushed by the Nazis.

Over 100 people, including Holocaust survivors and younger anti-racist militants, gathered outside the Porchester library in Bayswater, where Polish ambassador Ryszard Stemplowski and Westminster mayor Bradley unveiled a plaque honouring Szmul Artur Zygielbojm, a trade unionist, and representative of the Jewish Workers' Bund in the Polish wartime parliament-in-exile.

governments pleading for action to help the Jews against Hitler. He took his life in London after

the Warsaw ghetto revolt, and the failure of the Allies' Bermuda conference to offer any proposals for refuge. The Foreign Office said the British Empire was already 'overcrowded'.

In his last letter, read out on Sunday, Zygielbojm indicted these governments with sharing responsibility for genocide.

'I cannot remain silent. I cannot live while the remains of the Jewish people in Poland, whose representative I am, are being exterminated.

'My comrades in the Warsaw ghetto perished with their weapons in their hands in their last heroic battle. It was not my destiny to die as they did, together with them. But I belong to them and in their mass graves.

'By my death I wish to make Zygielbojm lobbied Allied the strongest possible protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people.' Despite his despair at the attitudes of governments, Zygielbojm expressed his faith that 'a new world of freedom, justice and socialism' would

At a reception after Sunday's ceremony, veteran Majer Bogdanski recalled Zygielbojm's work with trade unions and youth in Lodz in the 1930s, and organising workers' battalions to defend Warsaw when the rightwing government fled.

'In death as in life,' Bogdanski said, 'comrade Artur was a warrior, on the battlefield for his people.

Zygielbojm's daughter-in-law Adele and grandsons, who had flown in from the US, spoke of their pride in his struggle and aims. Historian David Cesarani said ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and Bosnia, and the fight over asylum laws in Britain, showed the struggle must continue.



Szmul Artur Zygielbojm

The meeting, at the Yaa Asantewaa African cultural centre, finished with the Bund anthem 'Der Shvue' (the Oath) and the Partisan song.

A Commons Early Day motion last week praised Zygielbojm's heroism and that of 'all fighters against racism and fascism'.

French Communist Party pledges support to 'concern for the truth' about Trotskyist deaths in World War II

BY PAUL DAY

FOR the first time the French Communist Party (PCF) has ackowledged allegations that it was involved in disappearances of Trotskyists in World War II. It has not, however, answered the allegations.

On 2 October 1943, 80 prisoners escaped from Puy-en-Velay prison camp. The majority were PCF members but there were also five Trotskyists. Albert Demazière, formerly of the Trotskyist International Workers' Party, was the only survivor of the five.

On supply duty for the Resistance in the Queyrières woods near Yssingeaux in Haute-Loire, he became separated from the

other prisoners and could not find them again. He says he owes his life to this.

On 26 or 27 October, says Demazière, his four comrades from the Fourth International — Pierre Salini-Regal, Abram Sadek, Jean Reboul and 'Blasco' (Pietrotresso, a co-founder with Gramsci of the Italian Communist Party) — were 'murdered in accordance with orders from the highest source'. Demazière describes their deaths as 'crimes of blood, of which the PCF is in no way innocent'.

On 15 April this year, Demazière, with journalist Paul Parisot and independent Trotskyist Jean-René Chauvin, wrote to Robert Hue, national secretary of the PCF, asking for his help in

'a matter of historical clarification'.

What happened at Puy-en-Velay was not even explained in Henri Naguères' monumental History of the Resistance.

Some 50 signatures — historians, MPs and academics — were attached to the letter. In asking Hue that the PCF give historians of the Resistance 'the answers they are waiting for', Demazière says he is 'convinced that the former leaders [of the PCF], just like the FTP [the Partisans and Irregulars] of Velay in 1943, some of whom are still alive, can also clarify you on the events that we are now remembering.'

He points out that the underground in 1943 was led by Commandant Massat (Théodore Vial),

a central committee member of the PCF after liberation.

Hue answered on 7 May. He pledged his full support to this 'concern for the truth'. 'A truth, even disturbing, even difficult to bear . . . would not make me draw back.' Hue said he was 'not unaware of the conflict in relations between Communists and Trotskyists over the course of our history', but that 'times, happily, have changed'.

However, things aren't going to be fully explained just yet. Hue declares himself 'deeply shocked by insinuations that some kind of gagging order could have been given by the leadership of the PCF to those of its members who knew how things had actually happened.'

Page 8

Saturday 18 May 1996

Newsdesk 0171-387 0564

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NATO nuke waste scare in Bosnia

ALARM has grown in Bosnia that NATO's implementation force (IFOR) and foreign companies working with it could be using the country as a dumping ground for dangerous nuclear and chemical waste.

Without a word to Bosnian authorities, national or local, IFOR has taken over 20,000 square metres of state-owned land near Kladanj,

between Sarajevo and Tuzla, for a vast dump. Local people speak of a 'smell similar to soap' from the site, but suspect something more dangerous could be stored there.

Bosnian Agriculture Minister Stjepan Bagaric has visited the site with an official commission, and voiced concern that municipal authorities had not been consulted, nor given an opportunity to monitor waste, which might be in an unsuitable location.

An American officer reportedly told them: 'The US Army respects the laws of the country, but it does not necessarily implement them.'

The minister, whose full title is Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Resources, is concerned that the dump's location could threaten the environment of the small river Stupacnica, and that of the major rivers in central and northeastern Bosnia, the Krivaja and Bosna.

Afraid

IFOR located the dump in the village of Cule, and engaged the US company Browne and Root to build it. Bosnians are afraid that similar arrangements could bring more dangerous chemical materials from abroad.

Bosnian authorities have criticized IFOR before for the way its units behave on patrol, for tearing through city centres with armed transporters, and for the ransacking of premises in Sarajevo. They have also complained of excessive cutting down of trees.

Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic has warned that some foreign companies could use the NATO force as a cover to bring in dangerous chemical and radioactive waste.

Former Agriculture Minister Ahmed Smajic says IFOR has

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

threatened the health of Sarajevo citizens by uncontrolled garbage dumping, and by spilling large quantities of oil and derivatives on Mts Igman and Bjelanica, polluting water supplies.

Smajic said Bosnian officials were not allowed to inspect some places which IFOR used on Mt Igman. He emphasised that IFOR vehicles and their cargo are not under Bosnian authorities' control. He thought the pits from which sand had been dug for IFOR fortifications could be filled with barrels of nuclear waste brought from ships at sea.

After Serb forces withdrew from Ilidza in mid-March, Bosnia and Herzegovina federation officials found a concrete bunker with four barrels of radioactive material at the TAT thermal equipment factory, belonging to Energoinvest. Before the war the company made equipment for the nuclear industry.

The Sarajevo newspaper Dnevi Avaz said contaminated material from the building spread dangerous radiation over a 1km radius.

IFOR experts visited the building and confirmed the dangerous radiation. The building was sealed off as a precaution, and entrance forbidden. IFOR said local residents and international police force units stationed in Ilidza could have been affected.

City link for Karadzic

TOP City of London firm Peat Marwick has reportedly clinched a deal with indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic's 'Republika Srpska', to develop a stock exchange and related institutions in its territory.

IFOR's 'even-handedness'

BY FARUK IBRAHIMOVIC Independent journalist, Tuzla

A MOB of several dozen Serb extremists armed with rifles and hand-grenades headed towards a village within the territory of the 'Republika Srpska' where Muslims live. The aim was to expel these Muslims from their homes as had been villagers did not want to leave

done some years ago in the Drina valley region.

Their purpose was to have a 'pure' Republika Srpska, without a non-Serb population.

During the war this village had been under the control of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Army, but in peace, according to the Dayton deal, it has to be given to the Serbian entity. The their village, in spite of the injustice done to them.

Near the village the mob, marching under cover of night, was stopped by IFOR. The incident was averted. Good. IFOR arrested the most militant in the group. The next day these peace-breakers were handed over to the police of the Republika.

The scenario seen before is

Fighting for freedom in Croatia

CROATIAN editor Viktor Ivancic could face up to three years imprisonment on charges of defaming President Franjo Tudjman. The charge against Ivancic, editor of the biting satirical weekly Feral Tribune, came as the Council of Europe was deliberating whether Croatia's lurches towards dictatorship should disbar it from membership.

In another move to intimidate critics, the newspaper Vjesnik, which speaks for Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) party, has tried to smear civil rights campaigner Ivan Zvonimir Cicak, accusing him of working for the former Yugoslav secret police, the UDBA, from 1966. In fact Cicak, who was only 16 then, was imprisoned several times by the former regime for his political activity.

The Croatian Journalists' Association has denounced Vjesnik's attack as 'shameful'. It says those responsible are working with the Croatian secret police to discredit opponents, and are a disgrace to their profession.

In parliament the president of the ultra-right Croatian Party (HS), Sucic Hrvoje Sosik, who owes his seat to appointment by Tudjman, said: 'The fight for democracy is a fight for communism!

Another pro-government MP. Ivan Aralica, notorious for his articles attacking Bosnia and Bosniaks, dissociated himself from this remark, but accused Tribune journalist Marinko Culik of 'hatred against everything that is Croatian'.

In a report for French radio Culik had criticised Croatian efforts to carve up Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as human rights violations.

People are contrasting the government's tough crackdown on dissident media with its lenient treatment of right-wing thugs.

Croatian police have again interrogated chief editor of the weekly Nacional, Ivo Pukanic, and journalist Jasna Babic. Pukanic said that the state prosecutor had started investigations

against his weekly paper, and that an indictment can be soon expected, the second in two weeks.

The first indictment was against an article about lack of saftey at Dubrovnik airport and dilapidated technical equipment.

The second concerns a reprinted article by Babic on Dejan Milic, a Croatian solider who in 1993 killed four members of the Grgic family in Novska. Milic was released and last month again committed a murder in discotheque 'Podmornica' in Sesvete near Zagreb.

Pukanic said that police had asked about his sources and that he had refused to answer.

M. Culic, Feral's journalist, also refused to answer similar questions. He was also asked about the details in other writings and who his contacts were in the opposition parties and in the governing HDZ.

Culic said that Feral expected to be among the first victims of the renewed offensive, because of its satirical nature.

repeated, which is not good. The reputation IFOR has gained among the people could easily be lost.

There is another incident, which more drastically exposes the IFOR mission and unveils its clear stand against Bosnians.

Seven men from Srebrenica have wandered through the woods for ten months. They did not have food or clothes. How they managed to survive the exceptionally long and bitterly cold winter God only knows. At the end they decided to give themselves up to IFOR.

At that moment they had four pistols and two hand grenades. After questioning by IFOR they were all handed over to the Serb forces. Four are in Bijeljina, indicted for allegedly killing two Serbs on 1 May this year. The other three are still in Zvornik. The government protested but IFOR has not responded so far.

IFOR has built two bridges over the river Sava, one in Brcko and another in Bosanska Gradiska. Thus the Serbian entity will have a communication with Eastern Slavonia (via Brcko bridge) and with a part of Croatia where a Serb population still lives. What about Bosnians?

They have to use a ferry in Orasje and wait for days to cross the river. If they don't like it there is another route available, three times longer. Two pontoon bridges across the Sava near Orasje have been constructed for IFOR purposes only and can't be used by Bosnians under any circumstances.

Israeli settlers plan expansion

BY DAVID DORFMAN

ISRAELI settlers are planning a massive expansion in the occupied West Bank with the aim of blocking further growth of Palestinian autonomy.

The \$4 billion plan has been prepared by a group of settlers' leaders who have been working with former minister General Ariel Sharon ever since the Oslo peace accords were signed three vears ago.

At present Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority is confined to only 28 per cent of the West Bank, and 70 per cent of the Gaza Strip, and its writ does not extend to the Israeli settlements.

Triple

The plan would triple the settler population to 500,000 by the year 2000. Twelve new settlements originally approved by the Shamir government in 1992 would go ahead, and existing settlements would be expanded.

The intention is to 'create facts' on the ground' regardless of what politicians say, or governments negotiate.

The plan has been released by Amana, a special section of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza



Palestinian protest against Israeli settlers in Hebron

(YESHA), as Israel prepares for elections on 29 May.

'It is necessary to concentrate settlement resources according to the premise that after the elections a government desirous of continuing settlement will be established, it says.

'The size of these communities, the connection between them, and their access to centres of Jewish population (Israel) will greatly influence their status in the eyes of the Israeli public - and therefore exert a direct influence on the political decisions that will be

made in the coming years.' The Israeli public is to be fleeced and manipulated (governmentsubsidised mortgages will be used at the expense of Israel's slums); the Palestinian public, not regarded as having any rights, would be manhandled, or terrorised out of the way.

The entire plan, complete with expensive computer-generated maps incorporating aerial photographs, has been presented to Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the main right-wing party Likud, and to his likely coalition partn-

ers in the National Religious Party.

But a victory for Shimon Peres's Labour Party would not rule the settlers' plan out.

By expanding existing settlements, particularly on 'state lands' and along bypass roads, accepted in the Oslo agreement, the plan would fit what Labour has been doing around Jerusalem, and exploit concessions it has gained from the Palestinian leadership.

Market

Using the private market and mortgages would spare the need for direct state funding or upsetting Labour's friends in Washing-

Peres has already promised to respect the 'natural development of the Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza'.

Labour's election literature talks of 'Separation between Israel and the Palestinians. We are here - they are there'; but adds: 'Most of the Jewish communities will remain under Israeli sovereignty.'

As well as calling for 'A united under Jerusalem Israeli sovereignty', a campaign advertisement declares 'The Jordan River is Israel's secure border' (Yediot Ahranot, 9 April).

So much for Palestinian 'selfrule', even in that 28 per cent.

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