

PENSIONS IN DANGER FROM BARINGS COLLAPSE

OVER 40 local-authority pension funds risk losing millions after the collapse of Barings, London's oldest and most prestigious merchant bank.

Hampshire county council admitted that £15 million was tied up in Barings. Lincolnshire council revealed that £2 million of its pension fund was at risk, and Thurrock council's £1 million investment is also exposed.

According to City opinion, there is only a 'slim chance' of this money being recovered from the administrators now installed at Barings.

The giant pension funds have no doubt been involved in derivatives trading — losses from this have caused the Barings bankruptcy — and in other highly complex financial instruments, with all the dangers that there could be wipe-outs on a scale that would make the Barings collapse small beer.

Many charities which invested in Barings, a bluechip merchant bank, stand to go to the wall. The donations and money from the fund-raising activities of tens of thousands of people could now end up with the liquidators.

Many old, sick, disabled and otherwise vulnerable people increasingly rely on hand-outs from charities as they struggle to eke out an existence.

Risk

Over 4,000 Barings jobs are at risk, over half of them in London.

But Barings is not the end of the story. The Bank of England could not persuade the commercial banks to bail out Barings because they know that there are more potential disasters waiting to happen.

The banks are intercon-

BY THE EDITOR

nected and under appropriate conditions a crisis for one bank can rapidly spread throughout the system.

The pensions of thousands of workers could be at risk following the speculative activities of one Barings trader in Singapore which brought about the fall of the Queen's bank.

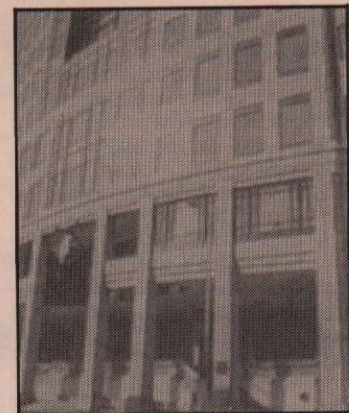
Gain

The trader, Nick Leeson, stood to gain \$100 million if his gamble had come off. Barings' aristocratic directors were also due for commission running into millions had his gambling on the Tokyo and Singapore exchanges been successful.

Had Leeson pulled it off he would no doubt have been promoted and hailed as the new whizz-kid of the 1990s.

The trading activities of the Leesons of this world are controlled by nobody.

These traders move billions around in search of speculative gains, whatever



Barings' London headquarters

the costs to millions of people. The City parasites produce nothing of any use to the ordinary people of this planet.

Hope

This is the casino capitalist system that Tony Blair and his fellow Labour leaders support. This is the system they say they will 'regulate'.

Some hope! The very opposite is the case. It is the speculators who will control a Labour government just as they control the present Tory government.

The Barings collapse shows that the demand for the nationalisation of the banks and financial institutions is no abstract question, but one which concerns millions and millions of people.

London Labour Party votes to keep Clause 4

THE London Labour Party conference has voted by 54 per cent to keep Clause Four of the party's constitution.

With the exception of Scotland, this is the only Labour Party regional conference so far to even discuss the question which is rocking the Labour Party and the trades unions.

After the London Labour Party's regional committee had voted to defy their national executive committee and put Clause Four on the conference agenda, the Ealing constituency Labour

Party attempted to block the conference discussion. This was narrowly defeated.

The final vote to keep Clause Four was swung by the trades unions. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union, the public-sector union Unison, the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the Manufacturing Science Finance union led the opposition to the Blair leadership.

Delegates report that Labour Party deputy leader John Prescott sat stoneyfaced throughout the proceedings.

Public meeting
Tuzla (Bosnia) trade union delegation
'Build international movement against fascism'
Thursday 9 March, 7.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (tube Holborn)
Tour of Bosnian workers at forefront of fight against ethnic cleansing.

Public meetings of Tuzla trade union delegation
7 March: Brighton. Brighthelm Centre. 7.30pm.
8 March: Cambridge (venue to be announced).
9 March: London. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. 7.30pm.
13 March: Leicester. Secular Hall. Humberstone Gate. 7.30pm.
14 March: Manchester Town Hall. 7pm.
15 March: Liverpool. Transport and General Workers' Union offices, Islington. 7pm.
16-17 March: Scotland (venues to be announced).
20 March: Newcastle (venue to be announced).
All meetings are organised by local trades union organisations.

Revolutionaries They Could Not Break
Ngo Van

Public meeting
Vietnam: revolutionaries against colonialism and Stalinism
Monday 6 March, 7pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn)
Speaker: Ngo Van

A worker and a Trotskyist, Ngo Van was imprisoned in the 1930s by the French colonial regime and in the 1940s by the Vietminh. His book, 'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight for the Fourth International in Indochina 1930-45', is now out from Index Books (see review p.7).
Meeting sponsored by Workers Press and Revolutionary History
Enquiries: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Phone: 071-582 8882.

Reject this barbarism!

US BOXER Gerald McClellan would have died but for the treatment he received at the ringside at last Saturday's 'Big Fight Live!', according to the surgeon who operated to save his life.

The fight had been allowed to continue despite the fact that for several rounds McClellan had appeared to be struggling for breath, with his gum-shield hanging out. He had been blinking almost continuously.

After he was knocked out in the tenth round he was led back to his corner where he slumped down and then slipped flat on his back.

Medical assistance was immediate. McClellan was given oxygen, his neck was braced and he was given injections.

Apart from not having fights at all, the British Boxing Board of Control probably can't do much more to make them safer.

A 8cm-by-6cm blood clot was later removed from McClellan's brain by neurosurgeon John Suttcliffe. According to him, McClellan 'will never box again' and he could end up disabled.

Michael Watson, who was knocked unconscious in a WBO title fight with Chris Eubank in 1991, is now confined to a wheelchair. Last April Bradley Stone was killed from similar injuries as McClellan's.

McClellan's opponent, Nigel Benn, was visibly upset. 'I just feel so empty,' he said. 'I've been up all night thinking about Gerald McClellan. It may have been a superb fight, but at the end of the day someone was injured badly and it has taken it all away. It doesn't mean anything now.'

'I am very distressed with the way things went. I would not wish it on anyone, and I am very, very upset about it.'

* * * * *

A COUPLE OF WEEKS ago 'nice man' of boxing Frank Bruno won his fight in the first round — much to the disappointment of the TV presenters and the crowd who booed during the relatively minor bout that filled in the programme time. They had, they thought, been cheated of the large amount of money they had paid to see two men pulverise each other.

The Benn/McClellan WBC super-middleweight fight was advertised as an even 'contest'. The ferocity of the fighting between the two men on Saturday showed this prediction to be correct. Benn himself went to hospital to check that his bruised jaw wasn't fractured.

'It's not that I can't take it,' he said. 'But I'm not going to take a battering like that again in my life. Maybe if he is all right it will be different.'

He described how he was 'in a lot of pain'. 'I've never been like this before. I feel battered from pillar to post,' he said.

Given the pressures of professional boxing, Benn will find it difficult not to fight again.

* * * * *

SHOULD boxing be banned?

Labour Party sports spokesperson and former boxer Tom Pendry said: 'Labour rejects the idea of a ban on boxing. A ban would serve only to drive the sport underground where unregulated bouts would prove far more dangerous and where the Queensberry rules would not apply.'

Premier fights such as the one between Benn and McClellan would actually be driven abroad, so this argument is more about making the money on 'British soil'. Unregulated fights already take place and will no doubt continue along with dog fighting, cock fighting, badger baiting, hare coursing, etc.

The 'Queensberry rules' were formulated in 1867 by the infamous Eighth Marquis of Queensberry, Sir John Sholto Douglas, who was a keen patron of the 'sport'. The culture of the time was that of rich aristos with their pet boxers who they would watch batter each other after dinner and cigars. These aristos would go around the country looking for fresh 'talent'.

This spirit continues with the promoters and managers, and the TV presenters, appearing in dinner jackets and bow-ties.

The aristocracy and the bourgeoisie look down on the 'lower orders' as less than themselves and find it entertaining to watch two representatives of the working class work each other over.

Our task as communists, part of the working class, is to build a new spirit, a new class-consciousness that rejects the barbarism that comes from the ruling class and is reflected in the so-called sport of boxing. With this new spirit workers won't fight each other, they'll fight the rotten capitalist system.

Letters

Could this be Kautsky?

In his letter (21 January) Janos Borovi says that what I have written in Workers Press about developments in present-day capitalism ('Globalisation of capitalism and the crisis of Labourism, 17 December 1994) 'could be [...] understood to mean that because of the unprecedented development of parasitism, of the socialisation of production, multinationals . . . world capitalism is able to emancipate itself from national boundaries, from the national bourgeoisie of each imperialist country'.

This would indeed be a strange, not to say mystical situation! How one could have a 'world capitalism' 'freed from the bourgeoisie of each imperialist country' — that is capitalism without any capitalists — I leave to others to think on.

Borovi then proceeds to suggest, by means of some vague references to Lenin's struggle against Kautsky, that what I have written is (or perhaps could be 'understood' as being?) in line with what Karl Kautsky wrote at the time of World War I.

In the first place, what was the essence of Kautskyism? Kautsky's theory of ultra-imperialism was designed to obscure the most profound contradictions of capitalism and thereby to justify the unity of the working class with the reformists and social chauvinists who had supported their 'own' ruling class on the outbreak of the imperialist war in 1914.

Kautsky justified this opportunism in 'Marxist' and 'internationalist' phrases. He raised the 'possibility' of a new phase of peaceful capitalist development based on the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital.

He suggested the 'possibility' that by a peaceful process of amalgamations one giant monopoly 'could' 'perhaps' 'one day' control the whole of world economy, whose contradictions would thereby be overcome.

Above all Kautsky proposed that imperialism was a 'policy' chosen by a predatory, reactionary wing of the ruling class, and not something that necessarily arose out of an earlier phase of capitalism.

Did my article referred to by Borovi have the slightest in common with such a position? I simply ask readers to look at it. To give just one example: speaking about the accelerated tendency towards socialisation in the world economy it says: '[I]t is a tendency subject to violent and inevitable disruptions which threaten the future of humankind.'

'Thus the present century has been marked by two world

wars, the slump of the 1930s, when economic nationalism, protectionism, and even autarky . . . reasserted themselves with great force.

'In short, imperialism, in its own way, unites world economy while at the same time breaking it up.'

Hardly a claim that capitalism is able to 'emancipate itself from national boundaries'!

In short what did the article to which comrade Borovi refers have to do with what he calls 'Kautskyism'.

Just as pertinent, what has the method employed by comrade Borovi to do with that of Marxism and with science in general?

Geoff Pilling
West London

Help unions in Nigeria

A PUBLIC meeting on Hands off our unions! Nigerian workers warn the military, and the battle of the Nigerian working class to defend independent unionism and build a workers' democracy.

Speaking at the meeting will be Rotimi Johnson, journalist, labour activist and member of the Campaign for Independent Unionism. The meeting is on Friday 10 March, 7pm, 365 Brixton Road, London SW9 (five minutes from Brixton tube).

Comrade Johnson is on a tour of Britain, holding solidarity meetings and discussions with trades unions and activists. We appeal to workers and trades unions in Britain to show international solidarity and give concrete support to the struggle of Nigerian workers.

Organised by the Nigeria — International Solidarity Link (NILSOL), c/o African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC). For information call 081-202 6292

ALISC, PO Box 256
London SE11 5TH

Japanese movement

COMRADE He Go Chi was born in 1928, and has been an activist worker since he was 18 years old. He organised and led many strikes and protests during 1946-48 and in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. He worked in the Toshiba factory during 1948 and was a member of the Japanese Communist Party.

In 1951, as a result of a policy disagreement, he was expelled from the JCP but rejoined five years later. In 1965, he was expelled again.

He still believes that the JCP has forgotten the fight against the exploitation of the workers by the Japanese monopolies both inside and outside Japan.

He Go Chi has now formed an independent united front, with other forces of the left in Japan, as well as continuing his activities within the international trade union movement. He has also published some valuable works on the rule of Japanese imperialism. These include works on the workers' movement in Japan, the Far East and South Asia.

The Iranian Refugee Workers' Association has invited comrade He Go Chi as a special guest to give a presentation about the situation of the Japanese workers' movement. All are welcome to attend the meeting and participate in the discussion to follow.

The public meeting is on Sunday 26 March, at 4pm in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Nearest tube: Holborn.

IRWA, PO Box 3646
London SW11 5YT

Accuracy on dockers

KEITH SINCLAIR, writing on the dockers' history (Workers Press, 18 February), says of my contribution: 'Cowan professes the need for "historical correctness" but then tears a quote from Bill Hunter's book totally out of . . . context' (emphasis added). How dramatic!

The insinuation is that I purposely distorted the meaning of a sentence in Hunter's book where he states: 'We were almost the only group . . . who gave consistent and loyal support to their struggle.'

I interpreted this as meaning dockers' struggles in general, and thereby suggested that Hunter was concealing the Oehlerite Socialist Workers League's (SWL) support for the struggle, assistance in producing the London rank-and-file paper, and recruiting of two prominent dockers.

After re-reading that section of the book I admit that my quote was out of context. Hunter does refer specifically to their 'struggle', meaning the struggle in the exodus of dockers from the Transport and General Workers' Union to the stevedores' union, the NASDU, and not to the dockers' struggles in general.

I apologise and admit it highly probable, as Hunter states (Workers Press, 28 January), he was unaware of the role of the SWL in London in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

It was a mistake, and not a conscious effort on my part — even Hunter apparently did not recognise the quote as out of context. His defence does not mention it (28 January), but replies on the basis that my interpretation is correct.

Sinclair is emphatic that Constable and Aylward joined the Healy group inside the

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Labour Party. What is the proof? Which Labour Party branch did they join?

That they co-operated with the Trotskyists in the dockers' struggles was known and discussed in SWL meetings, but that did not make them members.

Not only would Constable have had 'disagreements on entry in the Labour Party', as Sinclair states, but Aylward too. Both would oppose Trotskyist critical support for the Labour government.

Constable's last public appearance, to my knowledge, was the 'Newsletter' rank-and-file conference in November 1958. [The 'Newsletter' was the paper of the Healy group.] He had not intended to speak but wished to reply to one of the speakers.

In other words he was acting as an individual, and not speaking for and on behalf of the 'Newsletter' and the conference as would be expected of such a nationally prominent figure if he had been a member, particularly as it was an industrial workers' conference.

He praised the 'Newsletter's' support for the dockers' struggles, and 'welcomed the work of the "Newsletter"', which had done a 'remarkable job in the docks industry'.

He spoke, not as a member but as a close and thankful collaborator, when he stated: 'The employers know that the people around the "Newsletter" are determined to revitalise the Labour movement. This is why there has been such a campaign of vilification in the press.'

I agree with Hunter and Sinclair on the need to collaborate in writing the history of the dockers' struggles. I will certainly help where possible.

Tom Cowan
London SE27

Mind your language

I WAS particularly struck by Peter Fryer's comments on the new party where he talked of the need to use language that young people can understand ('Personal Column', 25 February).

To build a party from the grass roots means to go out to people who don't know all the political arguments and this needs special care in choosing words. If people go to a political meeting where they don't understand the language being used they'll just walk out.

And the world is strewn with political charlatans that can lead the inexperienced astray.

I've been in the movement for many years, starting in the Young Communist League, and although I fell out of activity for some time I'm also convinced of the need to build a party on a world-wide basis.


Eddie Weller
Norwich

Coming soon

MONDAY 6 MARCH: Public meeting on 'Vietnam: revolutionaries against colonialism and Stalinism'. Speaker: Ngo Van, a worker and Trotskyist who was imprisoned in the 1930s by the French colonial regime and in the 1940s by the Vietminh. Organised by WRP and 'Revolutionary History'. 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London WC1 (tube: Holborn).

SATURDAY 11 MARCH: Sanctions and Human Rights: the Iraqi Experience. Conference organised by CARDRI, the Centre for Islamic and Middle East Studies and War on Want. 10am-5pm, SOAS, Malet St, London WC1. £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

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



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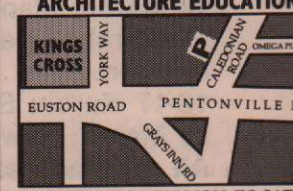
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Ireland deal seeks to maintain split in working class

BY JOHN STEELE

IMPERIALISM's attempts at putting together a parliament and administrative structures for the north of Ireland six-county statelet reached a new stage last week.

With the joint launch of the Tory proposals and the 'framework document' agreed by the London and Dublin governments, the process of establishing new forms of rule was taken a step forward.

And it is clearer than ever that the most important factor in this process is the involvement and support of the Sinn Fein leadership.

The British proposals centred on plans for a new 90-member assembly at Stormont elected by proportional representation.

Like the old Stormont, this

parliament will not have the power to raise taxes but will have legislative and executive responsibility over education, health and social services, law reform, environment, housing, local government, agriculture, finance, commerce and planning.

It will however have no powers over law and order, including the police. Clearly the British state has no intention yet of withdrawing its army or relinquishing any control over the forces of repression.

Under the joint agreement it is planned to have a new north-south body made up of elected representatives from the Stormont and Dublin parliaments.

Investment

As a first step in a process aimed at harmonising the inducements for investment by the monopolies, this body would deal with all matters designated by the two governments and 'would develop an agreed approach for the whole island' in respect of European Union matters.

In the framework document the Dublin government supports proposals to drop the traditional nationalist claim over the six counties and accepts that a majority vote in the six counties — what was known as the Unionist veto — can decide whether it remains tied to Britain.

Despite these attacks on deeply-held principles of Irish nationalism, Gerry Adams and the Sinn Fein leadership claim that the proposals for cross-border bodies gives the framework document an all-Ireland dimension which will inevitably, over a period of time, lead to a unified country.

They believe that a form of liberal capitalism, backed up by large investments from the United States and the European Union, and overseen by these cross-border bodies, can persuade a majority of the Protestant population that the border is an obstacle to progress.

There would be some truth in this only if the monopolies were

not forced to attack workers' wages and conditions.

Monopoly capitalism puts intense pressure on the national boundaries that were established under the political leadership of the national ruling class in all the major capitalist countries.

The Irish border is portrayed purely as the result of the fear of the Protestants of a united Ireland in which they would be ruled by a Catholic-dominated Dublin government.

While this was an important factor in the process, essentially the roots of partition are in the uneven development of capitalism in during the 19th century.

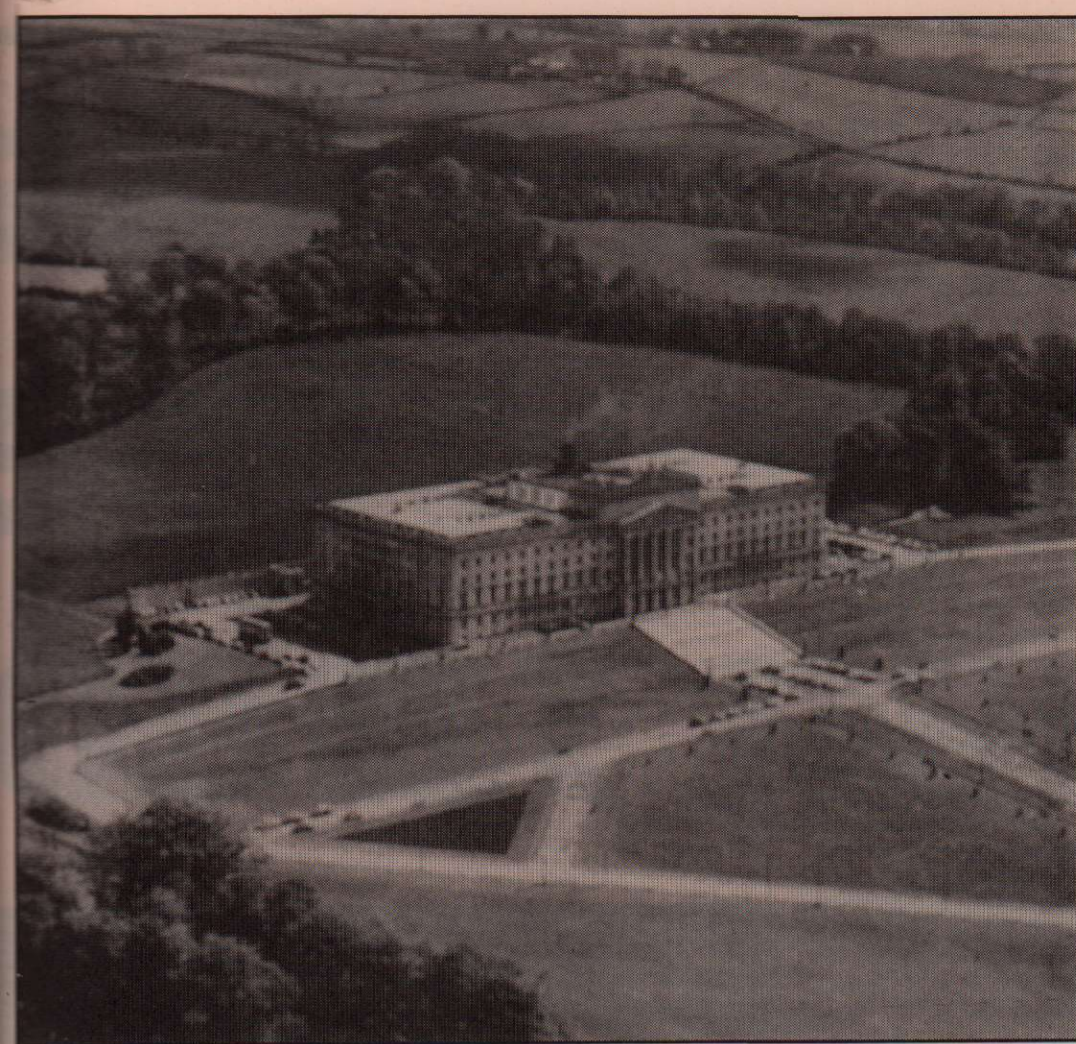
Behind the slogan of 'Home rule is Rome rule' the Unionist bosses mobilised the Protestants to maintain their markets in the British Empire as an integral part of the British economy.

The economic and political situation in the six counties has now drastically changed. The traditional industries through which the Unionist bosses dispensed their privileges have virtually disappeared and the north of Ireland is a huge financial burden on the crisis-ridden British state.

Even more important for imperialism, the continuing nationalist revolt which removed the old Stormont parliament in 1972 has to be beheaded and diverted from linking up with the Protestant working class in this changed economic situation.

The concessions to Sinn Fein are essential in attempting to ensure that its leadership plays the crucial role in re-assembling Stormont. And the British state recognises that the changed situation forces it to confront its old allies in the Unionist parties.

While the moves towards a form of economic unity will continue — particularly with the harmonisation of the conditions for foreign capital investment — the great problem remains for capitalism that it cannot allow any political unity that will bring together the working class, north and south.



The new Stormont assembly will have no powers over law and order, including the police

Bosnian miner tours coalfields

Appeal from Bosnia to British trade unionists

BY FARUK IBRAHIMOVIC

TUZLA coal miner Resad Husagic arrived in the mining town of Bolsover, Derbyshire, last Monday as part of a tour organised to involve British trades unions in the campaign to support the people of multi-ethnic Tuzla, Bosnia.

Husagic was warmly received by council leader H. Scrimshaw and deputy E. Watts. Husagic explained about the situation in Tuzla's mines and the problems faced. He presented a list of urgent requirements to restart production — boots, gloves, overalls, methane detectors, etc. These council leaders were unfortunately previously uninformed of the situation in Tuzla and its coalmines due to the lack of coverage in the British media.

The councillors welcomed the idea of organising the July convoy by the Tuzla District Trade Union Committee (see letter this page) and they promised their support.

The 'Council Day' is on 29 March and the councillors asked for a representative from the Tuzla Trade Union District Committee to attend and present the situation in Tuzla and its coal mines.

They suggested that any material like videos, etc., be made available. They also welcomed the idea of a photographic exhibition in the district council hall for the occasion.

See front page for details of Tuzla trade union delegation meetings.

Trade Union Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, President's Council of Tuzla District Trade Unions, Tuzla, 16 February 1995

Dear Friends,
FOR THREE YEARS the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina have faced a barbarous attack aimed at dividing our people and partitioning our country into ethnic ghettos. No words can describe the horrors that have taken place.

In Tuzla the workers have stood firm in defence of our multi-cultural way of life. Our unions make no distinction between Serb, Croat, Muslim or anyone else. We only try to defend our right to work and live together.

But we cannot continue to resist this attack without international solidarity from the working people of Europe. Our mines and factories are virtually at a standstill through lack of spare parts and raw materials. Our people are hungry. We lack everything that is needed for a normal life. How much longer can Tuzla and Bosnia-Herzegovina survive against the growth of racism and fascism if no one will help us?

If multi-cultural Tuzla is defeated can there be anywhere in Europe that is safe from the racists?

The Tuzla District Trade Union Committee and the Tuzla Coal Miners' Union are

therefore calling for the workers' organisations of Europe to come to our aid. We are organising a convoy to bring food, clothes, medicines and other essentials to Tuzla from all over Europe in July.

We appeal to your organisations to do everything they can to make this convoy as big as possible. We ask big factories to collect food and money from every worker and organise your own trucks.

If you cannot organise a truck yourself, collect food and money and we will organise transport.

We know there are many charities that have brought food to Bosnia, for which we are grateful. But in Bosnia the working people face a future of division. We need more than food. We need you all to take sides — the side of an undivided people against those who wish to herd people into 'ethnic concentration camps'.

So we want you to come with your supplies to Tuzla. Come and talk to the people in Tuzla. See for yourselves what is happening. Let the people see that they are not alone in defending the right of workers to live together in peace.

Sincerely yours,
Fikreta Sijercic,
President.

CIA puts bold face on French spying row

BY PIERRE DUPONT

WHILE Rupert Murdoch's 'Sunday Times' tries to recycle stale old tales about whether Russian spies bought the round for other papers' journalists 20 years ago, tempers have flared between the French and US governments over the latest spying allegations.

Five US diplomats have been accused of spying for the Central Intelligence Agency in France. The US government has said they will remain at their posts, and has suggested that French interior minister Charles Pasqua leaked news of the spy row to divert attention from a furore in France over government telephone tapping.

Pasqua denies this, and says the leaks came from the US side.

The five Americans whom Washington has been asked to recall are alleged to have tried to suborn French officials in order to obtain political and industrial secrets.

While the state department says the accusations are 'unwarranted', US newspapers

have been carrying articles on what a good job the CIA is doing, presumably inspired by CIA bosses anxious to show their agency still has a role to play in these post-cold war times.

The weekend before the Paris row broke out, the 'New York Times' had an article entitled 'How Washington Inc. Makes a Sale'. This described what the US commerce department and other divisions of the Clinton administration were doing to promote United States exports.

It then detailed how CIA and other intelligence briefings on bribes and kickbacks by foreign companies had been used by the state department to sabotage deals and level the playing-field for US business.

One of the biggest ever international bribery scandals centred on the US Lockheed aircraft corporation, and implicated politicians from the Netherlands to Japan.

On the other hand it's believed that US — or French — interests might have leaked information about Britain's controversial al Yamamah arms deal with Saudi Arabia. And remembering how the Westland

affair split the Thatcher government, it's interesting to note the scandal in Belgium over alleged bribery by an Italian helicopter firm.

Last year US firms pulled out of the Paris air show citing fears of French industrial espionage. But an article in the 'Washington Post' on Sunday 26 February, claiming the French competitors were bad losers, boasted that a large network of CIA spies together with the National Security Agency's electronic eavesdropping were helping US business win contracts.

Purchase

The US newspaper cited success in persuading Saudi Arabia to purchase 50 airliners from McDonnell Douglas, instead of the European airbus.

It also boasted that the Brazilian government had switched a \$1.4 billion radar contract from the French firm Thomson CSF to its American rival Raytheon Corp, after CIA reports alleging French bribes to Brazilian officials were shown to the Brazilian government.

The Taiwan government says it is going ahead with a \$1.9

billion deal to buy missiles from France, which the French government accuses the five US agents of trying to sabotage.

Other accusations against the CIA agents include bribing French officials to reveal their government's negotiating strategy in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks, and recruiting a France Telecom technician to obtain details of overseas telecommunications networks.

French Foreign minister Alain Juppe, who wants to bring the Clinton administration into line with French policy on Bosnia, said he was 'scandalised' that news of the US spy row had been leaked to the press.

Interior minister Pasqua and the prime minister, Edouard Balladur, who is also a presidential candidate, are facing trouble over phone tapping.

A police chief has had to resign over the use of telephone tapping powers, supposedly designed to deal with spies and terrorists, against a judge investigating local government corruption in Hauts-de-Seine, which is run by Pasqua. Balladur and Pasqua both approved the illegal eavesdropping.

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

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A day for independent unemployed
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Clause Four and Chechnya

WHAT has Boris Yeltsin's onslaught on Chechnya in common with Tony Blair's crusade against Clause Four? Besides both enjoying the good wishes of imperialist big business, it seems there's something more specific.

Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn told Caucasians who went to see him at the House of Commons recently that he and other MPs had sent a letter to the 'Guardian' about Chechnya, which the newspaper had turned down.

Following his row with Blair about Clause Four, Labour MEP Ken Coates sent an article to the 'Guardian', which it refused to publish. After trying the 'Independent', with the same result, Coates had his article published in the 'Daily Telegraph' (13 January), from which it was reprinted by Workers Press (4 February).

According to 'Tribune' (10 February), Coates was equally unsuccessful when he asked the 'Guardian' for the right of reply to an attack on him by Liberal peer Lord Russell. Peter Preston, then the 'Guardian' editor, said he'd look into the matter. Since then Coates has heard no more and has now gone to the Press Complaints Commission.

On the cards

ACCORDING to a story I overheard a while back, the Labour Party in Camden, north-west London, invited various celebrities to donate items for a fund-raising event. Film-maker Ken Loach told them that if the party was going to remove Clause Four they could have his membership card to raffle, since he'd no longer be wanting

Since then Loach and some friends have made a short film for the Defend Clause Four campaign, asking whether the 'market economy' espoused by Labour leaders can achieve social justice. In the film, American philosopher Noam Chomsky describes the idea as 'comical', a food policy expert says the market is dominated by big multinational companies and a trade unionist and a homeless person give their views.

Labour's trade and industry spokesperson Brian Wilson has rebuked Loach on BBC Radio Four's 'World Tonight' and on early-morning TV, without bothering to see the film. Ian Hislop and Tom Paul had a sneer at the film on 'The Late Show'. On 'The Week in Politics', Andrew Rawnsley saw the idea of a socialist film as hilarious. Perhaps after all this they'll let viewers see the film?

Meanwhile someone has been a bit 'previous' about Ken Loach's membership card. At a press conference supposed to be about the film, the 'Daily Telegraph' reporter wanted to know if it was true that Loach's membership of the Labour Party had lapsed.

He then pointed his finger at one of my colleagues — shame of names, another lapsed member,' said Loach. '... I couldn't help but wonder where he had got this information' (the 'Guardian', 24 February).

Apparently the Labour Party press office had told the media that Loach 'has no right' to take part in the Clause Four debate, 'because his membership has lapsed'. But the Tory media takes part in the debate, just as it influenced the Labour leadership contest, and they didn't object to that!

And isn't it interesting how the Labour Party's officials know what to support on Clause Four, without waiting for the membership's decision?

Charlie Pottins

Continuing the discussion on the campaign for Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution, CLIFF SLAUGHTER says the fight for the clause is vital as the Labour and trade union bureaucracy prepares for the class battles ahead, battles that will put on the agenda the need for a socialist party

THE RECENT agreement between four leading trades unions and a consortium of companies bidding to build part of the Channel tunnel rail link could hardly be beaten as a glaring example of how the union bureaucracy, instead of using the unions' resources to organise to resist the capitalist multinational employees, goes further than ever before in class-collaboration.

'In the first initiative of its kind, the unions have been asked to take an equity stake of £300,000 in return for an interest in a new railway and associated real estate,' reported the 'Guardian' (20 February 1995). 'But the plum is the possibility that the project would provide an extra 10,000 jobs from which the unions could directly benefit.'

The four unions involved are the Transport and General Workers' Union, the GMB general union, the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), and the train drivers' union, ASLEF. The Transport and Salaried Staffs Association is still discussing the plan. The firms in the consortium are the German multinationals, Hochtief and Siemens, and the British building company, Costain.

It is impossible to disagree with the 'Guardian's' own comment: 'There is a political dimension to the proposal, since it shows that the unions in transport are willing to embrace privatisation at a time when Labour is reviewing its railway strategy and is under pressure to support nationalisation.'

So much for some of these union leaders' fine words from time to time about 'defending Clause Four' of the Labour Party's constitution. GMB leader John Edmonds left

the constitution, and nothing to the opposition, and without a single member being asked to agree to this or not. Democracy?

In both cases — the Labour Party and the trade unions — it is not democracy but *bureaucracy* that rules: a bureaucracy committed to the preservation of capitalism.

These same people, Blair and his friends, accept the Tory anti-union laws. In aiming to get rid of Clause Four, they are anxious to tell the ruling class, and middle-class voters, that they are a safe option, that they do *not* represent the working class and its union organisations, and that they will implement the anti-union laws if elected.

Defence of Clause Four is not an issue only for so-called 'activists' in the Labour Party wards and constituencies. Put very briefly, the basic issue is this:

Socialism is necessary, and for this the working class will have to overthrow capitalism. For this it needs to be politically independent of the ruling class, and not only to be organised in trades unions, as it has been for generations.

But the trade union bureaucracy stands in the way. It keeps the working class tied to the capitalist system and state, above all by keeping it tied to the Labour Party, a 'capitalist workers' party.'

The fight to drive this bureaucracy out of the unions and replace it with workers' democracy is an absolutely essential step, therefore, on the path to the working class having a socialist party.

Blair, with his attack on Clause Four, has now been forced to put on the agenda of the whole working-

'In both cases — the Labour Party and the trade unions — it is not democracy but bureaucracy that rules: a bureaucracy committed to the preservation of capitalism.'

no one in any doubt on that score. He sees no conflict of interest between his members and their capitalist employers: 'We have been invited to participate and to contribute money because the companies recognise that working together is better for business and employees.'

In all this there is a real warning, not only to those millions of workers who see voting in a Labour government as the only way forward, but especially to those who look for the best way to defeat Blair and the right-wing campaign to get rid of Clause Four with its stated aim of common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Abuse of resources

BLAIR's campaign against Clause Four is another example of the cynical abuse of resources provided by the working class but spent against their interests. For Blair's travelling circus, visiting dozens of Labour constituencies to attack the party's constitution, at least £200,000 is being spent, all taken out of party funds, most of which come from the political levy of trades unionists (in accordance with the very constitution which Blair says needs changing!).

Blair claims to be a great defender of 'democracy' against the left, but his party machine will provide nearly a quarter-of-a-million pounds for his attempt to subvert

class movement this very question: What kind of party? Why not a socialist party?

That is why the Workers Revolutionary Party agrees with the thousands of trade union members who have understood that the political fight to defend Clause Four against Blair is the business of trades unionists. That is why we work with other trade unionists in the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign to conduct this political fight on Clause Four in the unions, against the bureaucracy.

Why should trades unions, the basic defence organisations of the working class, be in the hands of people who put the working class's resources at the disposal of a party leadership that proposes, in government, to attack the unions? The trades unions founded the Labour Party in order precisely to *protect* the unions and their members from the law! (See Terry Brotherstone's article in Workers Press, February 18, on the origins of Clause Four.)

Blair and the Labour leaders for three-quarters of a century before him have lived with Clause Four (actually, ignoring it). Why then do they feel obliged *now* to make an issue of getting rid of it?

It is because they know that if they are elected to form the next government, they will use the full force of the police and the courts, and the army if necessary, against pickets and demonstrators, to smash strikes and to intimidate all

Clause the a soc



The struggle against Blair's attack on Clause Four must be brought together w

Clause Four and the building of a socialist party



Other struggles: top, the Parkside women's pit camp; above, demonstrators for the National Health Service

opposition to the cuts and attacks they will make on behalf of the ruling class.

These struggles are inevitable, as British capitalism, less and less able to survive in the world capitalist crisis, moves to take back the past gains and democratic rights won by working-class struggle.

This is a much more developed situation towards decisive class struggles, struggles for socialism, than situations in the past, where reformist 'socialists' in advanced capitalist countries such as Britain could from time to time be relied on to govern on behalf of capitalism and appease the struggles of the working class with reforms and concessions.

Fundamental solution

WORKERS will go through experiences of struggle, and through disillusionment with a Labour government in which they had placed their hopes, all of which will impel them to seek a fundamental solution: a real workers' government with a socialist programme of taking the banks and insurance companies and main industries and services into public ownership and control, without compensation, for the benefit of the people.

When the movement for such a programme builds up — as it can certainly do if Marxists begin now to prepare and organise politically those workers and other socialists who come forward in the diverse struggles — then a future Labour government will most certainly not want to be saddled with Clause Four!

And the bureaucratic trade union leaders, who will have the job of restraining their members and betraying them during strikes — no doubt on the spurious ground of loyalty to a Labour government — will not want in the Labour Party's constitution a clause calling for common ownership as the way to ensure the just reward for workers' labour!

There are some socialists, Marxists, who don't think they should get involved in the fight about removing Clause Four from the Labour Party's constitution. They say this on the grounds that to keep Clause Four was always hypocrisy and deception, that the Labour Party was never for socialism, and that it is better that this 'fig-leaf', as it might be called, is finally removed to reveal the Labour Party and its leaders for what they truly are.

But what we are saying in this article is that the removal of Clause Four is the political preparation of the Labour leadership and trade union bureaucracy (they are indivisible) for the next Labour government to inflict on the working class the defeats which capitalism needs. And so it is vital that as many Labour supporters as possi-

ble engage in battle to stop Blair.

Those who get into this fight, and in so doing learn the real nature of the right-wing leadership, of the trade union bureaucracy, of social-democracy itself, can and must become part of the advance guard of all those millions of workers who will soon come into conflict with the Labour government.

The job is not to say to them 'I told you so', but to bring their struggle against Blair together with the many other struggles of workers and of all socialists — in the trades unions over jobs and wages; the fight to send working-class aid to Bosnia; against the asylum laws and the Criminal Justice Act; against the destruction of services; against privatisation; against racism and fascism; against police violence and frame-ups; against factory and pit closures; against the capitalist ideological offensive that 'socialism has failed, Marxism is dead'.

Those who come to the fore in leading these struggles should and must be welded together with the Marxists now into a new political organisation or party which is working-class, Marxist, and internationalist.

This is the essential political preparation for the next round of big struggles. If it is not done, there is every danger of the coming struggles being fragmented, taken on one by one by the ruling class

'This is a much more developed situation towards decisive class struggles, struggles for socialism.'

(spearheaded by a Labour government) and defeated piecemeal.

Some Labour Party members who are fighting to defend Clause Four are doing so from the point of view of saving the Labour Party, or of making sure that it is a socialist party.

We in the WRP most certainly do not share that view. We say to them: we will fight with you against Blair; we have the same ultimate aim as you, socialism and a party which can lead the working class to socialism; but we believe the experience of the fight for that, against Blair and the rest, will show that social-democracy, or 'Labourism', is now revealed for more and more people to see as nothing more than the instrument of capitalism inside the working class, and that a party based on Marxism must be built.

We believe that through this experience we can develop together a common programme, a socialist programme.

We do not hide our own banner, our own beliefs. We are confident that, in a common struggle against Blair and the ruling class's preparations, you will put to the test our understanding of what Blair represents (of how he and his like must be fought to the end), and of the necessity of a party based on Marxism, on internationalism, on the working class

Therefore Marxists should certainly not stand aside from the struggle against Blair on Clause Four. That fight is now one of the most important political issues through which the political consciousness of the working class will be developed.

By political consciousness we mean the understanding that the struggles of workers must be brought together in a class movement directed against the enemy capitalist class as a class, one aimed at the overthrow of the power of capital and the establishing of the rule of the working class to begin the construction of socialism.

And this political consciousness will understand that such a struggle is international, that the revolution begins in one country but can be completed only internationally.

To be continued.

Lost Barings

THE CITY establishment is desperately trying to reassure everybody that the Barings Bank collapse is just a 'one off' — the result of the irresponsible or criminal actions of one 28-year-old dealer in Singapore.

The significance of the fact that Britain's most prestigious merchant bank could end in ruin as a result of the activities of one person seems to have escaped them.

The refusal of the commercial banks to support a Bank of England 'lifeboat' plan indicates that nobody knows the extent of Barings' losses.

It also suggests that the banks were not prepared to send a signal to other institutions in distress that they would always step in to pick up the pieces.

Facts show that this was not an isolated case. Last December Orange County in California — home to Disneyland! — and one of the wealthiest counties in the United States filed for bankruptcy after losing \$1.5 billion on the derivatives market.

Derivatives involve the gambling of huge sums of money, not on the buying or selling of commodities at some specified future date — these are plain 'futures' — but on guesses as to the future prices of commodities on the exchanges.

In derivative trading no commodities actually change hands.

It seems that Nick Leeson, the dealer involved in the losses that finished off Barings, gambled heavily on the hope or expectation that prices on the Tokyo exchanges would continue to rise.

It was the earthquake at the beginning of the year that brought the Nikkei (the Japanese equivalent of the FTSE index in London) tumbling and forced him into ever more frenzied dealing as he tried to recoup mounting losses.

He brought about the collapse of an institution that has existed for well over 200 years in speculation that appears to have been heavily concentrated into the three days immediately prior to his disappearance.

The sort of gambling that brought about the ignominious demise of the Queen's bank is not confined to 'Anglo-Saxon' capitalism. The German engineering company Metallgesellschaft lost more than \$1 billion on oil futures at the end of 1993.

A decade or so ago, 95 per cent of the world's futures trading occurred in the US. The figure has fallen to below 50 per cent as derivatives trading has spread around the world. Brazil, for example, now hosts the world's sixth-largest derivatives exchange, and a futures exchange has recently started up in South Africa.

One of the reasons that forced Barings into its Far Eastern activities was the need for more profit, just as it ventured into Latin America in the last century. It was heavy losses sustained in Argentina in 1890 that almost brought about the bank's end. The difference then was that the Bank of England was willing and able to mount a successful salvage operation.

As the 'experts' — as usual wise after the event — call for the tighter regulation of derivatives trading, or even its prohibition in the case of the banks, it is rumoured that what are known in the current jargon as 'financial engineers' are now

employing CAD — computer-aided design — to create even more exotic derivatives.

The cost of such innovations, in terms of software development as well as hardware, are beyond the means of a small player such as Barings was.

For amongst other things last week's crisis has shown that Barings was not big enough to compete with the giant trading houses, most of them still concentrated in the United States.

* * * * *

IF IT had to happen, it could not have happened to a nicer bunch of chaps than those who ran Barings, that most gentlemanly of merchant banks.

Education at one of the top public schools, followed by a spell in the armed forces (preferable the Guards), was for long almost a prerequisite for a top job at Barings.

The bank is chaired by Peter Baring, part of the family dynasty that stretches back to 1762. Baring, cousin of the previous head of the bank, was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

His brother, Nicholas, is chairman of insurance giant Commercial Union, and was until recently a non-executive director of Barings. Nicholas enjoyed the benefit of an education at Eton and Magdalene. After service in the Coldstream Guards, he was aide to the governor of Kenya, and he joined Barings almost 40 years ago.

Their mother, Lady Rose Baring, was the eldest daughter of the 12th Earl of Antrim and was at one time a lady-in-waiting to the Queen.

The seventh Baron Ashburton, John Francis Harcourt Baring, is chairman of the oil company BP and is closely involved in the bank's affairs. Educated at Trinity College, his royal links include a spell as lord warden of the Stanneries for the Duchy of Cornwall.

The baron's mother, the Honorable Doris Mary Therese Harcourt, was the daughter of Viscount Harcourt.

But the increasing pressure of competition in international financial markets, and the need even for such a blue-blooded bank such as Barings to keep up with brasher upstarts, forced the bank to employ yuppies like Leeson, a man said to be able to 'move markets'.

Well the markets have certainly moved him — to an unknown destination.

* * * * *

WE CAN expect the usual calls from the Labour Party leaders for greater 'regulation' of the financial markets, as well as ringing denunciations of 'speculative capitalism'.

The truth is that capitalism is ever-more dominated by speculation. The buying and selling of pieces of paper, or even entries into electronic data banks, in the hope of making millions, if not billions, expresses the inner nature of capitalism at the end of the 20th century.

Of the trillions of dollars that cross the exchanges every year, 90 per cent is devoted to purely speculative activities, with a mere 10 per cent dedicated to the buying and selling of actual goods.

The lives of millions and millions of people are at the mercy of such gamblers. The future of several local authority pension schemes have been jeopardised by the Barings collapse, which on a world scale is a minor event compared with what may be coming down the line.

And Blair talks about a 'managed capitalism'!

Threadneedle

Solid start to German engineering strike

But conciliatory noises from union leader

BY BOB ARCHER

ENGINEERING workers in Bavaria, southern Germany, are in the forefront of action for a 6 per cent pay rise and to defend national wage contracts.

The IG Metall union won a vote for regional strike action after the engineering employers' organisation failed to reply in time to the union's claim.

About 11,000 union members stopped production on Friday 24 February in some 20 plants employing 24,000 workers in total.

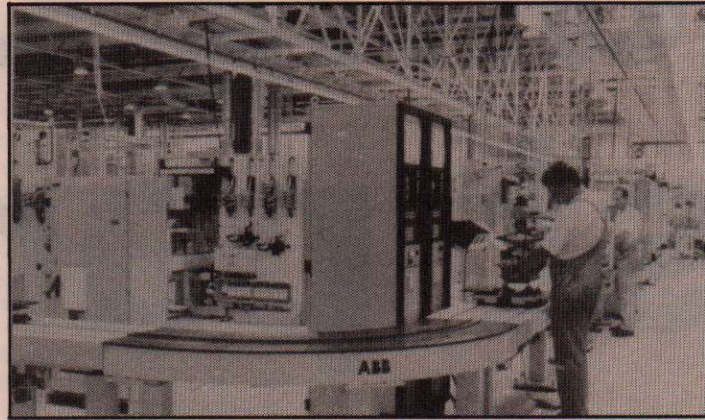
Action centres on the electrical engineering industry in Nuremberg and involves famous names like Siemens and AEG.

Another big plant involved is the Augsburg MAN factory.

Joined

Some 33,000 engineering workers in the neighbouring states of Baden-Württemberg and Hesse, and as far away as Rhineland-Palatinate, briefly joined the strike on Friday.

The wage demand is very important to German workers, whose purchasing power has



Audi car plant in Hungary: Kohl has warned that German jobs are being attracted away by cheap eastern European labour

suffered as the government has transferred huge sums of money to the 'new states' in the former Stalinist-controlled east Germany (DDR).

But unionists at all levels know that there are moves from the government and the larger employers to break up the national system of wage contracts.

By driving a series of loopholes into the system, they hope to weaken the negotiating power of the unions and hold wages down while introducing

'more flexible' working practices.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl recently warned that German workers could find their factories and jobs being attracted away from Germany by cheaper labour in eastern Europe.

The German engineers are therefore faced with exactly the same problem as the French seafarers who struck and protested last week against the use of Polish workers at a fraction of their pay: how to protect hard-won wages and conditions when the employers can switch to unorganised lower-paid workers from abroad.

Many German trades unionists have also closely watched the experience of British workers over the last 15 years. Their determination not to be driven down the same road is one of the main reasons for the solid re-

sponse to the strike vote.

Just as the leaders of the French CGT union were able to persuade militant seafarers to end their action and await the outcome of government arbitration procedures, so the leaders of IG Metall and the German TUC (DGB) are giving a nod and a wink to the employers.

Hinted

As the strike began, IG Metall chief Klaus Zwickel said: 'We never said there had to be a concrete figure' [from the employers]. Zwickel also hinted that the union would agree to offset some of the wage claim against the introduction of a 35-hour week later this year.

This follows earlier assurances from the DGB leaders to the government that they would curb militant action by their members in exchange for state-funded effort to safeguard jobs.

The round of struggles opening up in Germany offers the opportunity for the International Trade Union Solidarity Committee to discuss with German workers the three principles around which it campaigns:

- International working-class solidarity.
- Independence of trades unions from the employers and the state.
- Working-class democracy.

The International Trade Union Solidarity Committee can be contacted at PO Box 12, Barking, Essex.

Employers split over lock-outs

ALL German engineering employers are organised in one federation — Gesamtmetall — but firms of different sizes have quite different approaches. One medium-sized firm, Maschinenbau Grob in Mindelheim, has given all its employees special paid leave for the duration of the strike.

Divisions have appeared within Gesamtmetall and between the Bavarian engineering employers about whether to respond to the strike with lock-outs.

These divisions threaten to tear apart the carefully-tailored structure of German labour relations.

For example, the chief of AEG domestic appliance plant in Nuremberg criticises the Bavarian employers for not making an offer to the union. However, it seems his chief aim is to reach a separate agreement with his 'own' workforce.

This would clearly weaken the overall negotiating power of the union.

Another factor is the pressure bearing down on the small and medium-sized employers, the famous 'Mittelstand' seen by many as the source of stable growth in Germany since the war.

Professor Eberhard Hamer, chief of the 'Mittelstand' Institute in Lower Saxony, in a re-

cent article in 'Die Welt am Sonntag', criticised politicians in the Liberal Party (FDP) for neglecting the interests of the 'Mittelstand' in favour of the industrial giants.

He also pointed to the abandonment of resale price maintenance, the insistence on set opening hours for shops and services, which represent a gain for workers, and the increasing taxes on the middle class, which are used to subsidise big business.

Condemns

And he condemned the ruling conservative CDU party for spending the hard-earned money of the middle-class taxpayer on welfare expenditure.

He said: 'the middle class finds none of its interests or concerns represented by any of the political parties' ('Die Welt am Sonntag', 19 February).

In fact recent changes in company law and increased interest in previously unquoted stocks on the part of regional stock exchanges tend to encourage the larger medium-sized enterprises at the expense of smaller business.

They also mean growth by the more competitive enterprises and a decline in one-person or family businesses.

Tighter labour laws restrict action

GERMAN labour relations have been tightly regulated by law since the foundation of the German Federal Republic after World War II. On the one hand, this has avoided disruptive industrial action by involving union representatives in overall economic decision-making.

On the other, it contained certain guarantees of trade union rights and helped give German workers their leading position in Europe in terms of wages and benefits.

While employers are debating whether or not to lock workers out in response to the engineers' strike, the IG Metall union is facing the legal complexities of paying legal pay.

This is the first major test of a 1986 amendment to paragraph 116 of the Federal Labour Law. This effectively stops the labour department from paying fall-back pay to workers in the same industry but not covered by the same agreement if they lose work because strike action holds up deliveries.

The union is unwilling to pay

out of its strike funds because such workers are only 'indirectly' affected by this kind of 'cold' lock-out.

In the last major strike in 1984 a lot of employers used the absence of deliveries as a reason to close down, which is why IG Metall officials are very keen to put off closing 'indirectly' affected firms as long as possible this time.

'Indirectly' affected groups of workers put on short-time working can claim top-up pay from the labour department. Their claim will be assessed by a neutrality commission made up of three representatives each of the employees, the employers and the president of the labour department.

All directly affected union members of at least three years' standing can claim weekly strike pay from the union equal to 12 times their subscription plus a premium linked to the length of their membership.

IG Metall is not saying how much it has in its strike fund.

Unemployment meeting ducks the issue

BY ROY THOMAS

OVER 80 delegates of trades union councils and trades unions participated in a wide-ranging discussion at Congress House, organised by the Greater London Association of Trades Councils (GLATC).

The meeting on full employment, opened by Tony Benn MP and addressed by John Hendy QC, Rita Donaghy (public service union UNISON member on the TUC), and Diana Holland (Transport and General Workers' Union women's officer),

ducked the issue of unemployment under capitalism.

Hendy quoted the government's own publicity boasts that Britain has the lowest wages and the fewest legal constraints on employment in Europe.

The problems of part-time work, one-year contracts and contracts with no set hours were discussed, but it was only late in the afternoon that the question was raised about the ability of capitalism to meet the needs of working people.

Tom Durkin (Brent TUC), said things were worse than in the 1930s and proposed a cut in spending on the army and the

re-establishment of a Greater London Council. Sylvia Pye, from Women Against Pit Closures, spoke about problems in north-west England.

It was the GLATC speaker who said that since the object of all employers is to make a profit, the less money paid out in wages the better for them.

Large-scale unemployment was vital for this, by ensuring the profitability of many enterprises, he said. Millions are unemployed in America and Europe and around the world.

The GLATC speaker called for working people to take control of production, distribu-

tion and exchange. As a first step the reason for low wages and longer hours must be challenged.

He called for the May Day demonstrations to focus on the demand for a legal maximum working day, and for a legal minimum wage.

It is clearly not possible to solve the problem of unemployment and poverty without resolving the question of who controls the state and industry.

Most of the union delegates at the meeting seemed to be content to work within the system not just in the short term, but in the longer run as well.

Aboriginal land rights swept aside for zinc mine

AUSTRALIAN Aborigines of the Waanyi people are furious after a Native Title Tribunal refused their claim for land in northern Queensland.

The tribunal was set up to settle ownership of land traditionally occupied by Aboriginal peoples. However this ruling shows that soft-hearted liberalism will never be allowed to stand in the way of business. For the land is to be turned into potentially the world's biggest zinc mine.

Murradoo Yanner, speaking for the Waanyi after the tribunal had decided that pastoral leases granted in 1883 had extinguished native title, said that the claim would be taken to the United Nations. The land, the tribunal held, was controlled by Century Zinc.

Murradoo said the tribunal had breached its own procedure in order to find for the mineowners.

Under the Native Title Act the mining company and the Queensland gov-

ernment were not entitled to make submissions against the claim, he said. 'Yet they were there with a stack of Queen's Counsels and the Waanyis had to match them at great cost.'

Queensland's premier, Wayne Goss, had always backed the mining project, Murradoo alleged. Certainly Goss's response has been cynical in the extreme. He expressed pleasure at the outcome of the tribunal and called on the Waanyis to negotiate with the mining company — for jobs at the mine!

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Minister Robert Tickner's sole response has been to urge Aborigines not to abandon the tribunals, even though it is now clear to all how they are going to work.

'I think we are very early into the work of the Native Title Tribunal, and I think there is still great hope for those processes . . . to address indige-

nous aspirations,' he commented.

■ Aborigines in the Northern Territory are up to 40 times more likely to die of infectious disease than other Australians, according to a recent report.

Aboriginal women in the territory are about seven times more likely to die of cervical cancer than non-Aboriginal local women, while the risk of death from diabetes mellitus is up to 15 times greater in the Aboriginal population.

For the first time the Australian Army Reserve is to send its Medical Corps to Aboriginal-owned land to tackle the spread of tuberculosis and leprosy.

Charlie Gunabarra, a health worker in the Maningrida community 350km east of Darwin, said that the major problems were diabetes and heart and respiratory diseases.



Aboriginal women in Maningrida at high risk of cervical cancer

Trotskyist heroes of Vietnam revolution

TERRY BROTHERSTONE reviews 'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight For the Fourth International in Indochina 1930-1945' by Ngo Van. Ngo Van, a worker and Trotskyist, was a participant in the events described in the book. He was imprisoned by the French colonial regime in the 1930s, and by the Vietminh in the 1940s. He is speaking at a London meeting on 6 March (see front page)

SPECIALISTS in Trotskyism's history have noted its impact in Vietnam in the 1930s. But there is little accessible literature on the subject in English. Ngo Van's book begins to fill that gap.

'The heroes of this book . . . begins the editor. We live at a time when intelligent young people are suspicious of 'heroes', usually justly. But Ngo Van's readers, seeking knowledge and inspiration for their own struggles, will surely think that here are exceptions.

A good way to read this book is to begin with the explanatory notes and maps, which set the scene, and then to turn to p.122, to meet one of the main heroes of the story.

Ta thu Thau was born in Annam province in 1906 and spent his teens helping his widowed father feed a family of six. He gained a scholarship to complete his secondary education by 1923 — a time when the national liberation movement against French imperialism was gaining strength in Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina (today's Vietnam).

After trials of nationalist agitators in 1925, Thau later wrote, it was possible to recruit 100 members to the Young Annam Party in three days.

Like others of his generation Thau went to university in Paris, capital of the colonial power. Here he absorbed the French Enlightenment's heritage, and became involved in the activities of exiled Indochinese nationalists.

These influences drew him to Marxism: the Russian Revolution was still the dominating event for anti-imperialists everywhere, but the Communist International was already in the grip of Stalinism.

Stalinism — ideology of the increasingly bureaucratized and self-interested leadership of the USSR, centred on Josef Stalin — had substituted 'socialism in a single country' for the revolutionary internationalism of the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, who came to power in Russia in November 1917.

One important role of this story is to show how those Indochinese revolutionaries who became Trotskyists — that is, fighters for Bolshevik internationalism against Stalinism — came not from splits within Communist Parties, but straight from the left wing of the nationalist movement.

Their grasp of Marxism was influenced not only by the Russian Revolution, but also by the defeat of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 and Trotsky's critique of the Communist International's responsibility for it.

This gives it especial relevance for understanding a central tenet of Trotskyism — the theory of 'permanent revolution'. Ngo Van writes that after the suppression of a mutiny of Tonkin troops at the French base of Yen Bay in February 1930 Ta thu Thau, already an anti-Stalinist as well as an anti-imperialist, stressed that:

'[Bourgeois democracy] has

'Central to Ngo Van's story is how the Vietnamese Trotskyists in the late 1930s and during World War II wrestled with the rise of the Stalinists under Nguyen ai Quoc (Ho chi Minh).'

sufficiently unmasked itself for there to be no longer room for a democratic revolution. There remains now the proletarian revolution. . . . The question of independence must now be merged with that of the proletarian revolution. The choice "independence or slavery" now poses itself in another more concrete form: "socialism or nationalism".

Here, comments Ngo Van, 'we see the fundamental opposition between the theory of "bourgeois-democratic revolution" put forward by the Indochinese Communist Party

and that of permanent revolution'.

Van explains how the Indochinese Trotskyists also drew their conclusions from the analysis of the role of the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution in the Chinese disaster: they learnt this from international supporters of Trotsky's Left Opposition.

The opposition between Trotskyism and Stalinism was not merely a confrontation of ideas. It was a life-and-death struggle which, in the conditions of the 1930s and 1940s, led to the death of many Trotskyists. This highlights the second key issue of the book.

Double enemy

WE MAY recognise the heroism of those who sacrificed their lives because they chose to fight not only the main enemy — imperialism — but also a counter-revolutionary cancer within international communism itself, that is Stalinism.

But we must still ask: did they accomplish anything? Were they not courageously but uselessly spitting into a hurricane?

This question returns us to Ta thu Thau and his comrades who were to die at the hands of the Stalinists at the end of World War II, and to Ngo Van's own approach to history. In an introductory chapter he reflects that history is too often written from the victor's standpoint.

Van quotes the 17th-century French thinker Blaise Pascal: 'I only believe history told by witnesses who had their throats cut.' But, Ngo Van notes, even these words can be misused.

They were quoted by a French Communist Party historian in a 1955 book about Vietnam. He wrote first that the Trotskyists, by criticising the Stalinist Popular Front tactic in the late 1930s, had acted in the interests of the Japanese enemy; and, second, that they reduced themselves to a sect, which 'completely degenerated, going so far as to become direct agents of Japan in 1944-45'.

This double slander was withdrawn . . . in 1987! But that is only the beginning of the necessary settling of accounts. The Vietnamese Trotskyists did not suffer sectarian degeneration through isolation from the people.

Rather, it was because of working-class support for their internationalist revolutionary perspectives — and a major contribution of this book is to show that support's real depth — that they had to be destroyed by the Stalinists within the national movement.

The murderous elimination of Trotskyists, under cover of the confused situation, was

Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain after 1956, but hailed in the intellectual establishment as a leading Marxist, provides a grand sweep which simply amounts to an apology.

He sees significance in those who had their throats cut only if there was some superficial success: supporting the Soviet Union, or creating bourgeois-nationalist regimes in former European colonies, or electing social-democratic governments in the West.

Obsessed with the dangers of fascism and his own dismissal of the working class's revolutionary potential, Hobsbawm sees no socialist perspective

was the guiding principle.

Ho chi Minh's Vietminh had to eliminate the Trotskyists to accomplish their 'revolution'. In reality it halted the revolution in the name of a national-bureaucratic accommodation with imperialism. Ho acted according to Stalin's diplomatic deals with the Americans and the British at the 1945 Potsdam conference.

Historical truth

NGO VAN reaches a different level of historical truth to Hobsbawm. He resurrects a hidden past, not merely to pay homage to it, but to instruct the present for the benefit of the future.

Ta thu Thau and his comrades were true communists whose ideas and actions were determined by consciousness of the need to represent the future within the present. Now their story is more fully told. In the crisis of world capitalism at the end of the 20th century, those willing to study this work are better equipped to reject the idea that their struggle, however noble, was in vain.

'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break' has been painstakingly edited by Simon Pirani. He provides informative appendices and an excellent apparatus of notes, glossary and bibliography. The index of accented Vietnamese names and expressions, to assist Vietnamese readers who understand English, is an internationalist gesture for which editor and publisher must be commended.

Many young people in Vietnam today have English as a second language. It is to be hoped that this story will find its way to many of them.

The book's main weakness lies in its origins as journal articles. Readers must allow for some repetition, interrupting the narrative flow. It is a small price to pay for a story which needs telling — and, in Europe, to none more than those currently rallying to the cause of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight for the Fourth International in Indochina 1930-1945', by Ngo Van (translated by Harry Ratner), is published by Index Books. It is available at £11.95 plus postage from Index Books, 28 Charlotte Street, London W1P 1HJ. Phone 0171-636 3532. Fax 0171-274 8342.



Saigon street honouring Trotskyist revolutionary Ta thu Thau: its name was changed in 1984

necessary for the Stalinists to impose their policy (at once sectarian, opportunist and utopian) of building socialism within the framework of the nation-state.

Ngo Van's clarification contributes to historical understanding well beyond the important history of Indochina itself. It calls for the rethinking of 20th-century history — and in a different way from the superficial discussion generated around Eric Hobsbawm's 'The Age of Extremes'.

Hobsbawm, one of the few intellectuals loyal to the

outside defensive actions under the slogan, dominant in Stalinism since the mid-1930s, of the popular front. The core of this is the subordination of working-class independence to 'progressive' opinion.

Central to Ngo Van's story is how the Vietnamese Trotskyists in the late 1930s and during World War II wrestled with the rise of the Stalinists under Nguyen ai Quoc (Ho chi Minh), and the effects of the popular front in the national-liberation struggle. For the Trotskyists the independence and internationalism of the working class

ILO report too much for British ruling class

THE recent draft report from the United Nations' International Labour Organisation (ILO), prepared for the forthcoming UN world social summit in Copenhagen, is unlikely to win friends among Britain's ruling class.

It commits UN countries 'to enabling all people to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work, and to maintain the goal of full employment', as well as to achieving equality, promoting social integration and eradicating poverty.

Just how viable this worthy goal is under capitalism does not seem to trouble its authors.

These 'radical' proposals are clearly more than employment secretary Michael Portillo, and certain Labour leaders, will be able to stomach, given that they have designed their economic policies with massive structural unemployment playing a crucial role.

Deregulation

The report says the labour market deregulation as practised by Britain and New Zealand has 'resulted unambiguously in improved labour market performance'.

But it adds that 'a purely (or mainly) deregulatory route to greater labour market flexibility will not be a panacea', since it 'is likely to involve a trade-off in terms of greater inequality and poverty'.

The ILO believes that a minimum wage will have a negligible impact on jobs. It says strong 'workplace employee bodies' will result in greater productivity and international labour standards are vital if 'globalisation' is to proceed 'benignly'.

British government ministers are aware that these proposals are completely incompatible with their brand of free-market economics, and they will play down the significance of the conference.

Portillo, who recently frowned upon 'tricksters' pushing schemes, ruses and clever-clever ideas 'to solve unemployment, is said to be, courageously, relying on his record as employment minister.

US and Britain back war on Chechnya

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

AS Russian troops continue their war against the Chechen people, US President Clinton has written to Russian President Yeltsin offering a political and military partnership.

Clinton's initiative followed British Foreign secretary Douglas Hurd's meeting with Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev in Stockholm on 14 February.

'We don't think Chechnya should necessarily affect the overall relationship,' a Foreign Office official said. 'The important thing is to keep open contacts with the people who we can do business with and help the reform process.'

The day before, Russian planes had been bombing Chechen towns and drunken troops were reported on the rampage in the devastated capital Grozny, looting and killing civilians.

Graves

Two mass graves of civilians, including children, were discovered near Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, last week. Russian planes bombed Shali, a town crowded with refugees.

Neither event disturbed talks between the Russian government and International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials about a \$6.2 billion loan, which were reported to be going well.

Yeltsin has announced a new budget, promising increased money for the armed forces, but holding down workers' pay.

NATO secretary-general Willy Claes has called for close ties with the Kremlin. 'We must acknowledge Russia's weight in European security and its legitimate interests,' he wrote in the 'Financial Times' this week. 'We need a co-operative relationship.'

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher had two days of talks with Kozyrev in Geneva last month. 'There will be no cold peace and the partnership between Russia and the United States will be preserved and strengthened,' Kozyrev told journalists on 18 January.

Christopher told a news conference:

'I can only repeat what President Clinton said . . . that he intends to press for aid to Russia.'

Christopher referred to the cost of the war in Chechnya, but softened earlier comments that Russian democracy was at risk because of a falling out between Yeltsin and the pro-democracy politicians, saying that such disputes are normal.

Kozyrev met German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on 21 January in Berne, Switzerland. Though urging that 'the bloodshed in Chechnya must stop immediately', Kinkel rejected

suggestions that economic assistance might be cut off if military action did not stop. Economic sanctions were not the answer, he said.

Kozyrev welcomed Kinkel's support for a political solution within the framework of the Russian constitution, meaning Chechnya would remain part of the federation. And Kinkel welcomed Russia's acceptance of a mission from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to assess human rights.

Russia's Transneft agency, responsible for oil export pipe-

lines, denied any connection between Russian military intervention in Chechnya and the planned construction of a Caspian pipeline linking the Tengiz oil and gas fields in northern Kazakhstan with the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk.

Over 1,000 Russian soldiers and more than 24,000 civilians have been killed in the war in Chechnya. Rallies opposing the war have been held in Moscow and all over Russia, from St Petersburg in the west to Petrovlovsk in the Far East.

At a demonstration in Chuvashia, a republic in the Rus-

sian federation about 500 miles west of Moscow, thousands of people came out to back Chuvash President Nikolai Fedorov, who is refusing to send troops to the war. Yeltsin had earlier annulled Fedorov's decree.

Distraught mothers suggested in speeches at the rally that Yeltsin should be shot for sending their sons to die.

Fedorov said he was unlikely to implement Yeltsin's decree. The president of Bashkortostan and other leaders of Volga republics were reportedly thinking of following Fedorov's lead.



Grozny market-place: the imperialist powers are forging a closer partnership with the Yeltsin regime

'Peace' means terror for Chechens

To their credit many Russian journalists have tried to expose the reality of the repressive operation against Chechnya.

They have provoked the regime's displeasure — and last month Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev said: 'I am against an Orwellian Ministry of Truth. But I am

also against journalists drawing conclusions only on the basis of what they have observed.'

One journalist guilty of this terrible crime, of reporting what she/he actually saw, submitted the following report to 'Moskovsky Komsomolets'. Workers Press thanks our comrades in Moscow who forwarded it to us

The right side of his face is a big yellow-blue bruise. He is thin; exhausted, and coughing continually. An engineer who graduated in Moscow, he speaks [Russian] with hardly an accent.

'I was taken straight from my home in Assinovskoy. They immediately started beating me with the butts of their rifles and threw me into an armoured car.'

'On the journey the beating continued. There were 15 of us there. We stopped somewhere in an open field. They pushed us out and told us to lie with our faces in the mud. I heard them speaking on the radio: "How many have you picked up? (five more, and we'll send a helicopter.)"

'They stopped the first one that came along, dragged five people out of it and beat them too. They bound them with green straps. The OMON men carry green straps in their pockets you get them round your hands — then you're a "combatant".

'The Mozdoka camp is a train wagon standing in a railway siding. There were 12 of us in one compartment. They beat us the time.

'Around the toilet station OMON men and all who pick up them are set upon with clubs. They beat, beat, beat . . .

IN STRICT accordance with recommendations by [President Yeltsin's] emergency council, the first, military stage of the 'restoration of constitutional order' in Chechnya has been completed.

Now the second, 'peaceful' stage is under way. The difference appears to be that now the internal security forces play the main role, while the army is a back-up force.

The change to the 'peaceful' stage was made out to be a fundamental one for the Chechen population. Whereas before the army had simply bombed and shelled residential areas, now the police dealt with every Chechen (and non-Chechen) individually.

The aim of the operation is to seek out and 'neutralise' combatants. This is how it works: a subdivision of the OMON [spe-

cial armed police] arrives in a residential district and searches every house.

They seize anything of value, smash up furniture and household goods, and, for their own pleasure, shoot all household animals [which are kept for subsistence purposes by many Chechens].

These task forces are, of course, hardly greeted with open arms by Chechen women.

But it is the men between 18 and 50 who really catch it. Regardless of whether they are combatants or not, they are taken by helicopter to the Mozdoka screening camp for investigation. There are also camps at Stavropol prison and at Pyatagorsk.

The Chechens do not exactly rush to welcome the Russian forces to their villages. But in one place, Assinovskoy, they

risked everything: the elders agreed with the Russian commanders that they would accompany the OMON men around the village, offer no resistance, and go with them to each home. They hoped to convince them that there were no combatants — and that they would part on good terms.

They let them into the village. And now there is no one but the OMON in Assinovskoy. The people have fled in fear to nearby towns and villages, where you can meet these refugees on every street corner and in every block of flats.

Men from the village who after an eight-day interrogation have not been proved to be combatants are returning from Mozdoka camp.

We were able to speak to one of these men in hospital: 52-year-old Hassan Chitayev.

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