

THE IRISH WORKER – compiled by JOHN STEELE

Nurses to strike

THE 28,000 nurses in the southern Irish state are set to lead the way in shattering the long period of relative industrial peace that has underlined the state's spectacular economic growth - the so-called Celtic Tiger.

This boom period for the bosses has depended on one crucial element: the tying of the organised Irish workers' movement to the state power in a series of national pay deals.

These pay deals have put legal restrictions on pay increases, doing away with collective bargaining and denying workers the chance to use their industrial strength to win a larger share of the value they produce.

But resentment among workers that they were getting a raw deal has been growing and the nurses are only the first of many sections of the workforce preparing to take on the government.

Their threat of strike action has already forced the Labour Court to come up with an offer over the limits set by the so-called "social partnership" national deals. But this has been rejected by a majority of over 90 per cent and they are currently balloting for all-out strike action. All the nursing unions will have concluded their ballots by 11 October. It is confidently expected that there will be a similar vote for an indefinite stoppage of work and notice will be served on the government and employers of a strike from 19 October.

Four unions are involved: the Irish Nurses Organisation which has the largest membership among nurses, the Psychiatric Nurses Association, SIPTU and IMPACT, which was the only union not to recommend rejection of the offer to its members.

The government is claiming that over the next three years the offer would raise the maximum ward sister's pay by more than 37 per cent to £27,522 but the unions want nearly £7,000 more. Under the new deal the maximum for staff nurses would rise by almost 26 per cent, plus extra allowance payments, but the nurses are holding out for parity with paramedics which means another £4,000.

Union leaders have rejected an attempt by the health service managers to impose at national level a wide-ranging list of areas entitled to emergency cover. They have insisted that decisions on emergency cover would be made by each local Strike Committee. When the strike goes ahead all hospitals, health centres and services provided by public health nurses will be affected. Strike Committees will arrange emergency cover in areas such as accident and emergency, intensive care and operating services. It is not just the pay and conditions of nurses that are at stake in this issue. The whole concept of national agreements between the trade unions, the employers and the government, particularly in the state sector, could be smashed.

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, has no doubts about the potential for increased militancy that a nurses' victory would bring. "To give in to the nurses claim would unleash a wave of follow-on claims and undermine the settling of disputes by a return of the strike

"There can be no partnership on equal terms between the representatives of capital and the working class."

action", he squealed.

And this militancy is not restricted to the public workers. A recent survey of over 2,000 workers in the private sector, carried out by the University of Limerick, shows widespread opposition to national agreements. Nearly 70 per cent felt they had not given workers a "fair share" of economic growth.

Already the list of workers threatening to blow a hole in the pay restraints includes:

* The three big teaching unions are preparing a claim to preserve pay relative to nurses win the present dispute - a significant "catch-up" pay claim of about 10 per cent.

* Dublin bus drivers are seeking a 20 per cent pay rise, bringing basic pay to £330 per week. Industrial action has so far been postponed pending further arbitration at the Labour Court but the drivers are exceptionally well-organised and will not easily allow any diminution of their claim. Bus Eireann drivers have a claim for parity with the Dublin drivers.

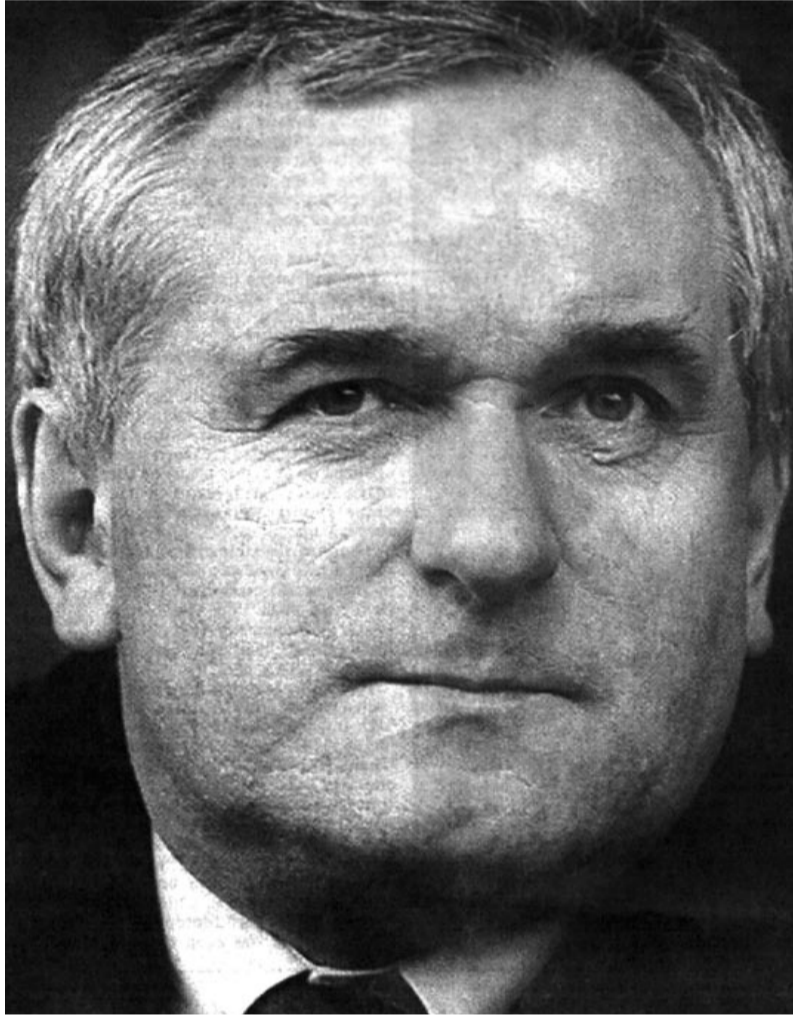
* Train drivers on the Dublin DART system have rejected an £8,000 offer to allow extra drivers to be trained in order that the DART can be extended to Greystones in Co. Wicklow. They are claiming £11,000 and are also supporting the signalling workers and overhead line engineers who want the same payment as the drivers.

* The civil service union, CPSU, are requesting a pay review in light of the nurses dispute.

Over the current three-year deal, known as Partnership 2000, labour productivity has been increasing at a rate of 5.2 per cent per annum but workers share of the national income has fallen from 75 per cent to 60 per cent.

This is one of the factors in the growing opposition to a renewal of the collaboration on holding down wages and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has had to call a special delegate conference for November. Pay elements in Partnership 2000 run out next March for the private sector and next March for the private sector. It threatens to be a stormy affair but the trade union bureaucrats have been down this road before and are working to head off the anger.

On every occasion to date, shortly before the time for renewal of these deals a number of leading trade union officials will make very radical speeches affirming that there is no possibility of a new deal unless the workers gain substantial increases. This time it is no different. The general secretary and president of ICTU have had a number of meetings with senior government ministers and employer representatives



Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern

"voicing the unrest of the members". And recently Jack O'Connor, a senior official of SIPTU, Ireland's largest union, told a meeting of regional union representatives that Partnership 2000 has become "obsolete, irrelevant and redundant".

But it is clear that none of these trade union bureaucrats are prepared to lead a break from the stranglehold that the national pay deals impose on trade unions. They think that a few percentage points extra will buy off workers. O'Connor made this clear, "In its place a special increase should be negotiated for all workers to take account of the economic growth over the last three years". His hatred of workers demonstrating their strength and organising ability in strikes was made clear, "If things are not to be allowed to collapse into an irretrievable mess, the government must immediately undertake a major initiative with a view to the development of a new consensus model". But the need of the working class is not for a "major initiative" by the pro-bosses government or a new "social partnership" with a little bit more written in for some sections of workers.

There can be no partnership on equal terms between the representatives of capital and the working class. To quote Trotsky in Marxism and the Trade Unions: "There is one common feature in the development, or more correctly in the degeneration, of mod-

ern trade union organisation in the entire world: it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power...."

"Monopoly capitalism does not rest on competition and free private initiative but on centralised command. The capitalist cliques at the head of mighty trusts, syndicates, banking consortiums, etc. view economic life from the very same heights as does state power; and they require at every step the collaboration of the latter."

In effect these "social partnerships" are the most brazen form of class collaboration. Working alongside the anti-trade union legislation they use all the authority of the state power to control and discipline workers - with union officials acting as policemen.

The twelve years of these deals in the south of Ireland has seen the gap between the rich and poor widen with tens of thousands living in misery. Up to one third of the population is at risk of poverty and there is a growing crisis in public health care and housing.

But the actions of the nurses demonstrate that the working class is not defeated and has great power through its organisations. The urgent task is to fight in these organisations for a victory for the nurses and other workers in disputes and through these struggles build the necessary support to break the trade unions from the national pay deal collaborations.

IN BRIEF

Banking on the Millennium

MAYBE they had them over a barrel, but still, well done to the banking union, the Irish Bank Officials' Association (IBOA). It has negotiated a nice bonus of £2000 for selected Ulster Bank staff who, on a voluntary basis, agree to be on call over the millennium weekend. This is on top of payments of up to £135 an hour if actually required to workand a day off in lieu. About 100 people, mostly in the information technology area, will be involved and will be called out if anything goes wrong with an automatic cash dispenser. Would you be tempted to pay a friend to go out on old year's night with super glue?

Airports not for sale!

LIKE a child let loose in a sweetie shop the privatisation drive of the Dublin government is not prepared to stop until all the goodies are gone. After Telecom next on the list is the sell-off of the airports. But this time they will not find it so easy. Resistance among the workers is growing and at a recent meeting worker directors from Aer Rianta and union activists from Dublin, Cork and Shannon airports decided to campaign against privatisation. SIPTU general secretary, John McDonnell said that the workers would "co-ordinate worker power to repel unwelcome advances by big business interests based solely on profit." Fighting words. Let's keep reminding him of them.

Stop murder on building sites!

AFTER a spate of deaths on building sites in September thousands of angry construction workers took to the streets of Dublin protesting at the continued carnage. Since the building boom in the south of Ireland started in 1994, almost 100 men have been killed. So far this year 11 building workers have died on site in accidents ranging from being crushed by a stone wall, to being buried alive in open, unsupported trenches. Thousands more have been injured and maimed as greedy bosses and sub-contractors blatantly disregard health and safety regulations. The government has been forced to "give assurances" that it will carry out a nation-wide attack to improve safety at building sites. But Mick Finnegan, head of SIPTU's construction branch which organises 8,000 building workers in Dublin, has little faith that there will be any improvement. "The proposed government safety blitz is being done to put on a show", he said. "It's only propaganda". For decades Irish workers had to emigrate to find work and endured the most horrendous conditions on construction sites in Britain and other countries, with many being killed. Now, when they can find work in their own country, the system of greed and profit - which forced them to emigrate - inflicts identical working conditions on them.

Hair shirts for workers: luxury silks for Haughey

CORRUPTION, corruption, corruption. Eat your heart out, Tammany Hall.

All the claims of Fianna Fail that they were the "moral voice of the nation" have been held up to loud ridicule as inquiry after inquiry in Dublin exposes the financial double-dealing and foulness at the heart of their periods in government.

The latest revelation about Haughey's shirt bill doesn't involve, by any means, the largest amount of money that

went astray. But it does capture the distorted values associated with the leaders of this classical, post-colonial independence party.

Unable to acquire the wealth and standing of their imperial masters they steal in order to parade as "equals".

The Moriarty tribunal has revealed that in 1991 Haughey, the former Taoiseach, sent almost £16,000 from his state-funded party leader's allowance to the Paris firm of

Charvet to pay for his expensive, hand-tailored shirts.

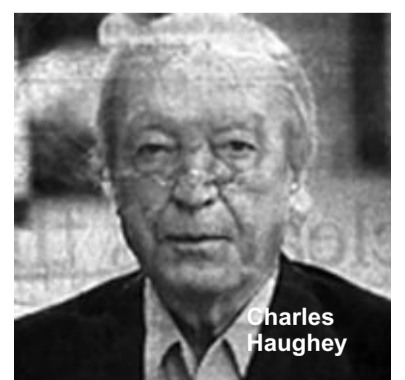
The most exquisite silk and the finest Egyptian cotton was used from taxpayers' money to clothe Haughey at a time when Irish workers were fighting against the hair shirts imposed by Haughey's government.

Unemployment was the highest in the EU, the hospitals were in crisis and, among other things, Haughey wanted to close three teacher-training schools to save money.

Other recent findings from the tribunal show, also, that Haughey stole money collected for the medical expenses of the former Fianna Fail minister, Brian Lenihan, and paid £26,000 to a Fianna Fail TD facing bankruptcy in order to keep him in parliament and save Haughey's slim majority.

Who, as party treasurer, was signing the cheques?

None other than Honest Bertie Ahern, the present Taoiseach!



Charles Haughey

We need to build a new workers' party - but how?



Liverpool dockers march together with activists from Reclaim the Streets through the streets of Liverpool.

BY JACKIE VANCE

TROTSKY, writing about the socialist revolution, said, "for success three conditions are required: a party, once more a party; again a party." With this consciously-chosen formulation he was attempting to concentrate attention on the importance of organisation as the working class engaged in the struggle to smash capitalism and eliminate its own exploitation.

For many revolutionaries problems of organisation have tended to be relegated to a secondary role. Party building has not been seen as a theoretical question on the same level as political economy or dialectics. But it is the party that is the embodiment of class consciousness and when the problems that surround its organisation are treated in a pragmatic, common-sense way the unity of theory and practice is lost.

Under Lenin's guidance the Bolsheviks had recognised that the working class everywhere needs not less but much more 'party organisation' in order to conquer power than was needed by the bourgeoisie in its great revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Trotsky was to come late to an understanding of this point but was, of course, thereafter the strongest defender of the Bolshevik principles and conceptions of organisation which he described as Lenin's greatest contribution to the development of Marxism.

In his "Lessons of October" (1924) Trotsky explains, "the part played in bourgeois revolutions by the economic power of the bourgeoisie, by its education, by its municipalities and universities, is a part which can be filled in a proletarian revolution only by the party of the proletariat".

In other words, the bourgeoisie while still an oppressed class is able to build up wealth and integrate itself in the institutions of the old regime through important positions, but the working class is not able to acquire these advantages and has to compensate by intense organisation of those forces which it does possess. As Lenin put it, "in the struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation".

Since the Russian revolution of 1917 there has been no change in the essential tasks confronting the working class internationally. Today capitalism is in an unprecedented crisis which produces mass instability and social crisis across the world. Power and wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the representatives of the transnational monopolies which accumulate staggering wealth through exploitation while hunger, disease and natural disasters

condemn millions to degradation and death.

In the advanced capitalist countries the disparity between the rich and poor continues to widen (latest research reveals that more than four million children in Britain are living in poverty) as capitalism is forced to attempt to take back every gain won by the working class. The socialist revolution is still a necessity.

But if the task of establishing working class power remains the same as 1917, what about the forms of organisation for a revolutionary Marxist workers' party? Must they be modelled on the forms developed by the Bolsheviks who never wavered from the fundamental principles of a centralised, disciplined party? (There were, of course, modifying ideas on party organisation and membership according to the fluctuations and changes in Russian law and the pressures of the civil war, but the fundamentals remained.)

Or is it possible for a loosely-knit, undisciplined, untrained organisation to prepare the working class for the taking of power?

These questions come more and more to the fore as the deep-going changes in the objective situation of the class struggle continue to have a dramatic impact on most of the parties and groups calling themselves Marxist. Splits, divisions and confusion are common-place and they are increasingly accompanied by a questioning of what were once firmly held views on the vanguard party and its forms of organisation. In particular the call for a new mass workers' party is now widespread.

It is absolutely essential that any discussion on the forms of organisation for a mass workers' party attempts to learn from the experiences of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP).

In Britain the call for a new mass workers' party was first initiated by the WRP in 1992. The WRP went on to dissolve in 1996 and form, along with a few other individuals, the Movement for Socialism (MFS).

There was, however, a major difference in reasoning behind the initiative made by the WRP and the current call of other organisations for a new party. Whereas these other calls, in the main, flow from the increasing isolation of small groups unable to recruit (and also in the case of the Socialist Party in Britain, a reaction to their splits) the WRP's decision was made because of the possibilities that were being opened up by the changed relationship of class forces, world-wide.

The break-up of Stalinism, with the virtual collapse of many Communist Parties, and the open abandonment of socialist aims by the British Labour

"Party building has not been seen as a theoretical question on the same level as political economy or dialectics. But it is the party that is the embodiment of class consciousness and when the problems that surround its organisation are treated in a pragmatic, common-sense way the unity of theory and practice is lost".

Party and its allies in the Second International, produced new theoretical and organisational tasks for Marxists.

Trotskyists were posed with breaking out of the small-group outlook that was, to a large extent, determined by the dominance of Stalinism in the workers' movement. They were challenged with joining with others in the reconstruction of the workers' movement and building a new party. We believed that it would be impossible to build a new party and International if this party did not incorporate the struggles and theoretical gains of the fight for the Fourth International. The challenge was to test this fight for the continuity of Bolshevism in the new situation and in front of the whole working class.

The WRP, and the Workers International, characterised this changed situation as favourable for the advancement of the cause of the working class. In opposition to all who said that the downfall of the Stalinist regimes in eastern Europe and the USSR would give a new lease of life for capitalism we were insistent that the crisis of capitalism would be intensified by the problems of restoring capitalism in these countries and re-integrating them into the world capitalist system.

This prognosis has of course been confirmed. From eastern Germany to

Russia - and with the barbaric examples of Bosnia and Kosova - imperialism is exposed as requiring a pauperised and defeated working class on which to attempt its restoration of capitalist property forms. Its inability to develop liberal, democratic forms in its "new world order" intensifies its contradictions and weakens its control world-wide.

Confirmation that the characterisation of the changed situation as "favourable" was correct also came in the campaigns of the WRP, particularly in Workers Aid for Bosnia. Support for this campaign came from many trade union branches controlled by Stalinists who previously would not even have allowed anything initiated by Trotskyists on the agenda. This happened not only in Britain and in France it was highlighted by the granting of a stall at the fete of the Communist daily paper, L'Humanite.

But, of course, the question begs to be asked. If the situation is favourable for developing the working-class movement why has the MFS been so unsuccessful? It has no public face and its near-total ineffectiveness is demonstrated by the absence of its members from the many class disputes in Britain.

I believe that one of the main reasons for its failure is the main issue that has to be confronted at this stage in the new party development and discussion. To what extent should there be a centralised structure among the forces who come together to form a new organisation? And should groups and parties maintain their independent structures inside the forces that come together to form a new party?

These questions were left up in the air prior to the formation of the MFS. There was general agreement that the WRP members would continue as members of the Workers International (WI) but there was no discussion on how the WI worked inside the MFS. Was it to be a faction? Were its members bound by decisions? Would they openly proclaim their WI membership?

One of the documents on the new party initiative agreed by the WRP membership before its dissolution declared, "We in the Workers Revolutionary Party (Workers Press) will fight to make sure that such a new party is a section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International".

Despite this decision, the group around Cliff Slaughter immediately proceeded to dissolve the Workers International into the loose, heterogeneous structures of the MFS. Along with this abandonment of organisational structures there was a related abandonment of arguing for a principled position and trying to win others, in the

course of joint struggles, to that position.

This has led to the shameful position of ex-WRP members in the MFS refusing to assert an independent position in Workers Aid to Kosova when the Kosovars in Britain insisted that a demonstration must take place behind the slogans of "Support for NATO" and "Bomb the Serbs". It also led to MFS members voting in favour of the Irish "peace" deal so that they would not be seen to have different views from the Garvaghy Road residents' leaders.

This method - ditching of principles under the guise of building "networks" - is incapable of building a revolutionary party. It avoids the ideological battles and the struggle of revolutionaries to change themselves as they change society.

These problems are not abstractly "theoretical" but are also very much concerned with organisational structures and, in particular, the question of a centralised party. This had already become an issue in the WRP before its dissolution when it was becoming more and more apparent that the development of the political initiatives of the party was being restricted by the lack of centralisation within the party.

There was no means of checking that decisions were being carried out and the political involvement of the members in the party's activities was, to a large extent, left to chance. The Liverpool dockers' dispute illustrated vividly how the party was acting as a barrier to strengthening the working class in its struggles and also to deepening of the party's links with the class.

Despite an analysis which correctly recognised the paramount importance of this dispute and its significance for the whole working class it has to be said that the WRP failed the dockers. Internal political letters called for all the members to fully engage in raising support for the dockers and to make the winning of the dispute their number one task. The work of WRP members helped produce some significant developments for the dockers, such as the many issues of the Dockers Charter and the work of the London Dockers Support Group but, actually, only a tiny handful of WRP members got involved and, with the lack of centralisation in the party, there was no way in which this could be changed.

It is accepted that a new party cannot come about by proclamation. Nor can it be imposed on the class. It can only be built through strengthening the ability of workers to win in the many struggles that they are forced to fight. But the party's activity and involvement in the class struggle must be organised and checked.

News from Namibia

WRP in election pact

The Workers Revolutionary Party of Namibia (WRP), has formed an electoral alliance with South West Africa National Union (SWANU)

The oldest political party in Namibia, SWANU considers itself socialist, and has always had differences with the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which has been the party of government since independence.

Already the WRP was instrumental in forming a Socialist Alliance on the land question and the declaration was well received. Agreement on this laid the basis for the electoral alliance.

The alliance will be fighting not only SWAPO but a new party, Congress of Democrats (COD) formed by former leading members and officials of SWAPO who fell out over corruption and the sending of Namibian troops to Congo.

Although the COD is very much a party of the urban middle class, the political shake-up resulting in its formation has opened up greater political awareness and discussion. Many can now see the truth of the WRP's campaign to bring into the open and fight for justice for the SWAPO ex-detainees — thousands of dedicated young freedom fighters who were imprisoned and tortured in SWAPO's dungeons.

Apart from SWAPO dissidents, some SWANU members have also joined the COD.

There are those who thought that SWANU would disintegrate, but the move away by some to the new party has left a hard core of SWANU members who are serious in their endeavours to understand their own history and to fight for the Namibian workers and peasants to take their future into their own hands.

It is on this basis that the WRP has been able to join with SWANU in the electoral alliance.

The All-Africa Workers, Peasants and Youth Conference

After the resounding success of the organising conference in Durban, the WRP has been making great efforts to continue the work for this conference, especially among workers in struggle for basic trade union rights and proper work contracts.

SWANU is very interested in this

conference, and there are now contacts in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and other countries in the sub-region.

All are suffering from the domination of imperialism and corrupt regimes.

We believe that a first step is to write a pamphlet to show the background and similarity of these governments and corruption in our countries.

Socialist Youth League

A growing number of young people has been attending WRP classes on socialism since March this year.

They organised a terrific May Day event, with music and football as well as speeches rallying the youth to the banner of socialist internationalism.

The COD has made a great effort to encourage the urban youth to join them, and some of those who have responded are now interested in working together with the Socialist Youth League.

Homeless Project

After their eviction and the break-up of the squatter camp in Windhoek (see WIP No 14, June 1999), a delegation of the homeless and their supporters was invited to put their case to officials of the municipality.

These officials knew that there was a growing movement among the homeless. (In fact 300 people attend the Sunday afternoon meetings.) Therefore a plot of land was secured to build homes.

A co-operative — the Housing Committee for the Homeless — has been set up, with a bank account and a list of donors.

Plans have been drawn up, and talks have been held with engineers from the water and electricity departments. A pilot project, including prepaid electricity and water has been agreed.

Apart from the homes, there will be a laundry, a cheap restaurant, a second-hand shop, a kindergarten and an after-school centre.

The Namibia Nature Foundation has designated the development as a cultural area and is assisting with plants etc. The people will grow their own vegetables.

It has been the unflinching fight of the homeless people themselves that has achieved this very important



The Socialist Youth League of Namibia celebrating May Day 1999



Evicted tenants fight for their homes

development, and all those involved know that what they do today can be of enormous importance for others tomorrow.

A Code of Conduct has been adopted dealing with everything from

hygiene and neighbourliness to anti-tribalism and racism.

This last point is important because it is well known that the SWAPO government is dominated by the Ovambo people who get special

privileges. This gives rise to jealousies and hostilities. Everybody involved in the project is therefore fully aware of the importance of the fact that three Ovambo families will be among the first tenants.

Land & Liberty

An irregular column, about property, poverty, the ground under our feet, and whether we've a roof over our head ...

Penang Lawyers

The programme for the 12th Commonwealth law conference, in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian capital, last month, promised that Britain's Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, would give a special address on the subject of "Human Rights in the Millennium", at 5pm on Tuesday 14 September. Alas, the address was cancelled at the last minute, having kept an appointment in Beijing the day before, then flown on to Singapore (20 minutes from Kuala Lumpur) on the Tuesday morning. (See *Private Eye*, 1 October). I hope the Kuala Lumpur hotel bars were able to cope with Commonwealth briefs drowning their disappointment.

At least the Malaysian authorities were spared the possible embarrassment of a discussion on human rights might bring. Earlier in the Summer, six leading Malaysian political and community activists were charged in Selangor with "illegal assembly", under the country's

1967 Police Act. Irene Fernandez of the Parti Keadilan Nasional and Mohammed Nasir of the Parti Sosialis Malaysia had gone with fellow-campaigners to show solidarity with 80 poor families who were resisting demolition of their homes, at Kampong Nipah Shah Alam.

The "squatters", as the authorities called them — supporters prefer to say urban settlers — simply claimed the right to put a roof over their families' heads. They were not offered any alternative housing. On June 28, enforcement officers from Subang Jaya municipality came accompanied by riot cops, who used water cannon firing dyed water at protesters, and beat women and children with their sticks. More than 50 people were detained. A number were released on police bail. The six leaders, charged with unlawful assembly, come to trial on 3 November, and if convicted could face heavy fines, and possible jail sentences. They claim they were exercising their right to peaceful assembly,

as guaranteed under the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. "Is it a crime to be with the people, in their struggle for decent housing?", asks Irene Fernandez.

Lord Irvine, whose efforts to house himself decently attracted media attention last year, could have avoided that question, if only he'd been invited to speak on something safer, but close to his heart, like Interior Decorating. Alternatively, they could have asked former Marxism Today editor Martin Jacques to speak to them. Jacques, who did so much to rid the British Communist Party of its old shibboleths, before moving on to the Demos Think Tank and the Independent, has been enthusing recently about the example set by Malaysia's economic policy.

THE HOUSE OF BENJAMIN

It's the old "Tied Cottage" dilemma: the job seems OK because a house comes with it, but if you incur the employers' displeasure, you could lose

your job and home in one go. There was the case of the English farm labourer who not only joined the union, but stood for the local council, and what's more, defeated the Tory incumbent, who happened to be his boss. "You're no use to me now", said his gov'nor next morning, and out went the farm worker and his family ... Ah, the good old days, when we knew our place — or did without one.

When Israeli voters sacked right-wing prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu on 17 May it meant he'd also lose the prime ministerial residence. After a last-thing bombing of Lebanon, the way others might go out and get drunk, "Bibi" left his wife Sara to start packing, while he went to the media pleading poverty. "I will be leaving the post with a pension of NIS 6,500 a month. How can I be expected to provide for my family?" In fact, some mean journalist pointed out, Netanyahu would get NIS 16,500 a month, more

than three times the average salary, plus a chauffeur-driven car, free telephone services, and other perks provided by the taxpayer. They also pointed to the big money he'd be earning on the lecture circuit in the United States, and to the \$1.2 million penthouse he had bought in Jerusalem. With times getting harder, people hadn't much sympathy for the Netanyahus.

Since then, to make matters worse, those highly-paid lecture engagements in the United States haven't materialised in the numbers expected. And the Israeli fraud squad has recently paid a visit to the Netanyahus, to ask about free building work allegedly done at their home and the official residence by businessman Avner Amedi. A £65,000 invoice was submitted to the prime minister's office after Netanyahu was defeated. Amedi is under arrest on suspicion of bribery. Bibi it's cold outside; but worse inside.

Muzhik

Earthquake in Turkey: Man-made catastrophe

This article by Liz Knight and Erkan Gok was originally published in "Labour Left Briefing". Workers International Press thanks the authors for permission to reproduce the article.

The consequences of the earthquake which struck north-west Turkey on 17 August have been more catastrophic than almost any other in Europe this century. Thousands of buildings collapsed in an instant. More than 40,000 people are dead or missing; 10,000 injured; and 600,000 homeless.

The earthquake was strong — 7.4 on the Richter scale — and happened at night. But the huge death toll was not natural or inevitable: it was man-made, and those responsible are the present rulers of Turkey.

80 per cent of earthquake deaths are caused by collapsing buildings and 85 per cent of Turkey is vulnerable to earthquakes. Yet more than half of all buildings in Turkey are built in violation of construction rules and unknown numbers without planning permission. Inspectors turn a blind eye. Politicians, often linked with building contractors, also regularly grant amnesties for illegal buildings at the approach of elections. In the last ten years, millions of the rural poor, economic migrants in their own country, or driven from army-occupied Kurdish villages, have been flooding into Istanbul and the industrial north-west. Often they can afford only badly and illegally built housing. That was where they lived and where tens of thousands have now suffered or died. Working class districts and in some cases virtually whole towns — Adipazari, for example — have been wiped off the map.

Scientists predicted this quake two years ago. Officialdom ignored the warnings. When it happened, the first official reaction was a government statement: "The Turkish state is strong, and the damage will be repaired."

"Where are all our damned MPs now? Where's the bloody Prime Minister? My father's

dead in there. But where's all the machinery and all the help? The soldiers get everything and we get nothing." So sobbed a woman in Golcuk, Sibel Celik (quoted in The Guardian, 20-8-99), three days after the quake.

Army help was directed first only at the Golcuk navy base. Many other areas received no official help whatever until four days after the earthquake. People tried to lift concrete slabs with their bare hands to reach family and neighbours they knew were still alive but who were almost all dead by the fourth day.

Journalists were unanimous in their description of the bureaucratic inertia, bungling and downright criminal indifference of the various wings of the state in relation to their people's suffering. Robert Fiske in The Independent pointed out that Turkey has one of the largest and best-equipped armies in NATO: "...they could destroy a thousand Kurdish villages, bomb Northern Iraq, help NATO assault Yugoslavia... but had not thought of organising a single specialised earthquake brigade to help their own people in one of the most earthquake-prone regions on earth..."

Turkish soldiers, when they did arrive belatedly at disaster zones, brought guns, not rescue equipment or even soup.

The army of Turkey, supposed defender of the people, was revealed as simply a war machine, operating entirely in its own self-interest, with the state as its puppet. Behind the parties in Parliament, dominated since the March elections by the extreme right-wing parties of the MHP (Grey Wolves) and DSP, stands the National Military Council, in power since the bloody military coup of 1980. The thin façade of democratic government has been ripped apart in the earthquake

like the facades of the ill-built homes.

The so-called strong state of Turkey — which the west courts and uses for its own political, military, economic and strategic ends — not only did not help its own people in their greatest need: it actually blocked help. Medical agencies made urgent pleas for blood donors. Blood came: from ordinary Turks — and from Greeks (including from spectators at a football match in Thessalonika).

Not one Turkish MP offered blood. Offers of rescue teams and aid came immediately from all over the world: the government delayed acceptance where they did not outright refuse it — initially refusing help from Greece and Armenia. Only mass popular protest from within Turkey forced them to concede acceptance. The Health Minister still went on to declare that "Turks do not need foreign blood" and insulted overseas aid workers and doctors.

"There is no government in Turkey". The words are repeated by many ordinary Turks who previously perhaps believed their leaders' rhetoric and even voted for them on the wave of anti-Kurdish chauvinism whipped up by the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in March. Now emptiness is revealed at the core of where there should be a civil state.

Yet the arrogance of the ruling classes even in the face of this horror and their exposure seems unlimited. While bodies were still trapped in buildings, parliament tried to rush through two measures. One was a bill granting amnesty to 60,000 criminals, including murderers, police torturers, mafia gangsters and politicians jailed on corruption charges. There was to be no amnesty of course for Turkey's thousands of political prisoners.

The other measure was a social security law attacking pension and union rights for public sector workers. Weeks earlier, 500,000 workers had demonstrated against the proposed legislation. Now the government has succeeded in rushing it through. But the proposed amnesty for criminals evoked



Supporters of the Daymer Centre in London load a truck with supplies for earthquake victims in Turkey

such protest from an already distraught people that the measure has now been delayed.

The earthquake revealed on the one hand the moral bankruptcy of the regime, and on the other the courage and communal spirit of ordinary Turks. It also revealed the power of international solidarity, as ordinary people across the globe, from Japan to the United States, reached out instantly to help.

The filthy rhetoric of right-wing nationalism suddenly lost all resonance. The Grey Wolves' slogan "No friends for the Turkish people except the Turks" and the chauvinist outbursts from government ministers during the period of the disaster were met with contempt by millions of ordinary Turks.

They saw their supposed ancient enemies, Greeks and Armenians and Cypriots, as well as rescue teams from countries world-wide, coming to their aid while their own government and army failed them. Finally even the government had to reluctantly thank "the enemy".

When Greece suffered an earthquake soon afterwards, Turks went immediately to their aid. A huge question mark stands over the political future in Turkey. A senior judge now even talks of changing the constitution to allow freedom of thought!

The earthquake has also

starkly revealed the implications of plans to build nuclear power stations across Turkey, many on known earthquake zones, e.g. at Camlihemsin in Adipazari and at Akkuyu in Mersin. The fate of the Tupras oil refinery is just an indication of the destructive potential of an earthquake at any of these sites. It could dwarf the effects of Chernobyl and contaminate vast areas of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. British Nuclear Fuels as well as nuclear companies from Canada, the USA, France and Japan are involved in these projects, which will go ahead with ratification of the MAI agreement — unless sufficient world protest prevents them.

As we go to press, a further violent aftershock has hit the same region. The nightmare is far from over for the victims. International aid is still pouring in, but the army and ruling parties are trying to control it for their own purposes and to take credit for its distribution. Human rights organisations, voluntary and community groups, trade unions and democratic political parties of the left have themselves set up tent cities to by-pass the bureaucracy's stranglehold. It is these organisations which are best able to ensure that aid reaches those in need directly and speedily.

In Britain many thousands of

people have given aid generously, and we are asked by communities in the earthquake zone to express their thanks for solidarity which will not be forgotten and which points the way to a better world. Help is still needed.

Report from Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre in North London:

Our warm thanks to all those in Britain, including many from varied ethnic groups, who donated to our earthquake appeal. Aid is still coming in. So far we have collected and sent to communities in Turkey 9 tons of material aid and more than £30,000 in donations. Among many, many generous donations were £1,000 from the sacked Liverpool Dockers and £500 from the Strike Support Group.

All the Turkish and Kurdish community, religious and political organisations in London have now joined in one united campaign to continue support for Turkish earthquake victims.

Please contact us at: Day-Mer Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, Former Library, Howard Road, London N16 8PR. Tel: 0171-275-8440; Fax: 0171-275-7245; e-mail: info@daymer.org; website: http://www.daymer.org. Aid cheques payable to: Day-Mer Migrant 2.

Massacre in Ankara prison

ON SUNDAY 26 September at about 2am prison warders and military personnel launched an armed attack on political prisoners at Ankara prison.

Twelve prisoners died and dozens were wounded. The Families of the Political Prisoners in Turkey are greatly concerned that the number of casualties may increase.

The attack was deliberately planned to either make the revolutionary prisoners either surrender or face destruction.

The situation in the prison had been volatile for the previous six weeks. Number 5 Wing is designed for 60 prisoners but 120 are currently crammed in there.

The prisoners' demand for a new Wing was ignored, so they occupied Number 5 Wing. The situation then deteriorated and, instead of seeking a solution, the prison administrators stopped visiting rights for relatives and

lawyers.

Early in the morning of 26 September gendarmes and workers attacked the prisoners with firearms. Their aim was to massacre the revolutionary prisoners. Most of the prisoners were also tortured. According to doctors some of the prisoners' throat and arms were cut.

The injured were taken to hospital but the gendarmes prevented them from receiving medical treatment. They were chained to their beds.

After the attack their lawyers demanded to see their prisoners but they were prevented by the police who sealed off the whole area. Relatives who gathered in front of the prison were arrested.

In protest against the massacre, political prisoners in other prisons retaliated by taking warders hostage. Four hostages were taken in Bayrampasa

prison, 14 in Umraniye, nine in Bartin, nine in Canakkale, five in Bergama, ten in Cankiri, and 22 in Gebze.

In Buca, Aydin and Bursa prisons the situation is critical and relatives fear that new massacres may occur.

The Families of the Political Prisoners in Turkey condemn these barbaric attacks and demand justice.

The prisoners demand:

The Justice Ministry should make a public statement about the attack.

Those responsible should be put on trial

prison transfers must be stopped

The abolition of cell-type prisons

Killed:

**Ahmed Devran
Umit Altintas
Halil Turker**

**Mahir Emsal
Abuzer Cok
Nevsat Ciftci
Onder Gencaslan
Erkan Ozkan
Zafer Kirbiyik
Aziz Donmez
Birdal Gokbiyik
Cafer Tayyar Bektas**

Injured:

**Cengiz Aslan
Veysel Eroglu
Ozgur Saltik
Halil Dogan
Resul Ayaz**

**Yasar Yildiz
Fatma Yildiz
Savas Gok
Murat Ozcelik
Behsat Ors
Erhan Goktas
Haydar Boran
Mustafa Borsuk
Emine Esin
Serife Bodur
Yildirim Dogan
Ismail Balci
Mehmet Keskiner
Hasan Coban
Enver Yanik
Bican Akpinar
Nihat Konuk**

Workers International Press: PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS

Tel: + (0) 171 627 8666

Fax: + (0) 171 627 4914

Email: sbphoto@eurobell.co.uk

Freedom for East Timor

Freedom for East Timor!

WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL PRESS unconditionally defends the right of the people of East Timor to organise their own country as they themselves see fit.

We support them in their struggle to determine their own destiny independently of foreign interference and we support their right to control the natural resources of their country and use them for the benefit of the people who live there.

"No nation can itself be free that keeps another nation in chains" is a historic slogan of the struggle to liberate Ireland from British oppression and still today it should guide the work of those in Indonesia and around the world who oppose the tyranny, murder, burning and rape organised by the Indonesian army, government, secret police and hired bandits to maintain their conquest of East Timor.

Despite brutal oppression by armed police and goon squads and despite the fanning of ethnic and religious tensions by a bourgeoisie battered by the effects of financial crisis, there are forces in within Indonesia itself who uphold the rights of the East Timorese.

The increasingly bold actions by students and trade unionists arise from the enormous social impact on Indonesia of the "Asian" economic crisis. It brought with it massive unemployment, huge price rises and devastating social dislocation.

Courageous demonstrations in recent weeks have caused the Indonesian government to drop plans for more repressive laws.

Such forces as the National Front for Indonesian Labour Struggle (FNPBI) (See statement reproduced on this page) vehemently oppose the chauvinism whipped up by "their" bourgeoisie to justify continuing the colonisation of East Timor.

However, Workers International does not join them in welcoming the intervention by foreign "peace-keeping" troops from the Australian, British and other armies, even though it may

Workers International Press Statement

seem to offer a much-needed defence against the criminal activities of the Indonesian army and the "militias" financed and inspired by it and the Indonesian secret police.

Imperialist powers like the US, Britain and France all bear the major responsibility for organising the gathering tragedy.

The whole experience of the people of East Timor is that the imperialist "international community" has completely left them in the lurch in the centuries of Portuguese rule and in the decades that have followed.

The corrupt dictator Suharto received western backing in 1965 for the massacre of a million Indonesian workers, farmers and intellectuals, clearing the way for the pro-imperialist Golkar regime which still clings to power today.

In 1975 the Suharto government was tacitly supported in their invasion of East Timor by the US, who were scared of a left-wing take-over there.

The CIA helped to train the military clique which is the power behind the throne in Indonesia. As recently as 1997 UK military colleges were still indoctrinating Indonesian officers in the counter-insurgency tactics they had refined fighting against liberation struggles in Malaya and in Kenya. The murderous "militias" throughout Indonesia are the direct heirs of these reactionary tactics.

Imperialism set up the whole crisis in East Timor. Last year the British arms industry supplied £112 millions worth of armaments to Indonesia. France supplied twice as much.

Investment flooded into Indonesia from western banks and financiers anxious to cash in on an "emerging market" with no trades unions, welfare states or democratic politics to hinder brutal exploitation.

But when the "Asian" economic cri-

sis exploded in 1997, Suharto was suddenly found to be a corrupt dictator keen to enrich himself, his family and his "cronies". The IMF and the US treasury insisted on his removal when he refused to let them walk in and take the country's economy over.

When the crisis in Indonesia offered the liberation fighters of FALINTIL and the National Council for Timorese Resistance (CNRT) the real possibility of victory, the United Nations moved in to organise elections under conditions where the "militias" were free to organise terror attacks against independence supporters. Meanwhile the FALINTIL was persuaded to stay out of the way in its base areas to permit a peaceful vote to take place.

The United Nations peacekeeping force obstinately regards the Indonesian government as a "partner" in maintaining order in East Timor. It will continue to regard the country as part of Indonesia until the Indonesian parliament accepts East Timorese independence. In just the same way, the imperialist powers recognise the "right" of Milosevic's Serbia to exercise sovereignty over Kosovo and the "right" of the Russian government to rule Chechnya.

The East Timorese people must be allowed to select their own form of government and political structures through which they themselves can run the country. Imperialism is not going to let that happen, and the voices which dominate in the United Nations are the voices of the big imperialist countries.

The way imperialism in the age of finance capital dominates and perverts all world developments was thoroughly understood by the leaders of the early Communist International (Indonesian workers were among the first to greet and join that body). Their understanding was well able to anticipate all the major features of today's so-called "financial globalisation", so in order to assist the re-awakening of an understanding of this phenomenon, "Workers International Press" reproduces below some quotations from Leon Trotsky's "Critique of the Draft Programme of



the Communist International".

The Third (Communist) International was corrupted and politically destroyed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which over decades perverted and corroded the political consciousness of revolutionary workers in every country. The struggle to restore a revolutionary political understanding of the imperialist epoch among the most determined fighters in the working class and the national liberation movements is bound up with the need to

organise and build the Fourth International.

- Independence for East Timor now!
- All Indonesian and imperialist troops out!
- Arm and supply the FALINTIL as the army of the East Timorese people!
- Let the people of East Timor freely decide their own future!

Indonesian Unionists back East Timor freedom struggle

The following statement from the National Front for Indonesian Labour Struggle (FNPBI) was sent to ACTION IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR - ASIET

FNPBI statement on East Timor

The ballot, offered as a way to resolve the 24-year old crisis in East Timor has been completed. The results show that the Timorese people reject the special autonomy offered by the Indonesian government and have chosen to be a free nation.

The Timorese struggle to be a free nation have gone on for many centuries against Portuguese colonialism and then against the militaristic Indonesian government. They have paid a high price, both physically and materially to wage that struggle. The Indonesian military invasion since 1975 has cost more than 200,000 lives and led to many human rights abuses including beatings and rapes. The international community's response to the military acts of Indonesia depended on the Cold War interests of each country at the time.

After the ballot was completed and a series massacres of pro-independence forces, UN staff and journalists by pro-integration militia members (supported by Indonesian military and police) commenced, the international community has again taken a position on the issue of East Timor. In this case, the

international community has condemned the Indonesian government who are thought of as no longer able to provide security in the territory. Condemnation and international pressure has come from Australia from its government and through the call for bans on Indonesian products by Australian trade unions. In one instance, there was even the incident of flag burning at a demonstration outside an Indonesian consulate. The response to this by several forces was to retaliate and burn the Australian flag and to invade the Australian Embassy in Indonesia. These actions show the low level of understanding of the history of the struggle in East Timor and the shifting of the conflict from the massacres carried out in East Timor to a conflict between two countries. In responding to the situation that has arisen since the ballot in East Timor, the National Front for Indonesian Labour Struggle (FNPBI) hereby express:

- a. Our full support for the results of the ballot in East Timor, as a reflection of the aspirations of the East Timorese to determine their own fate
- b. Our condemnation of the anti democratic acts committed by the pro-autonomy forces of TNI and POLRI (Indonesian police)
- c. Our condemnation of all acts of murder and destruction by TNI and POLRI committed against the innocent civilians of East Timor
- d. Our condemnation of all acts of violence by TNI and POLRI which have

driven out the Timorese from their own country

The FNPBI therefore demand:

- a. Immediate withdrawal of TNI and POLRI from East Timor
- b. Disbanding of militias which are supported and armed by TNI and POLRI
- c. Formation and entry of international peacekeeping forces into East Timor
- d. That all forces to respect the results of the ballot which is a reflection of the aspirations of the Timorese
- e. End to all support given by the Indonesian government to the militias
- f. End to the sending of Indonesian security forces to East Timor

We declare our full support for all the solidarity actions and strikes conducted by trade unions worldwide.

We call on the international community, especially the workers to maintain pressure on the Indonesian government through strikes/industrial action, economic sanctions and other forms of pressure.

Jakarta 11 September 1999

National Front for Indonesian Labour Struggle

Dita Indah Sari (Chairperson)
Ilham Syah (General Secretary)

ACTION IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR (ASIET)
P.O. BOX 458, BROADWAY NSW 2007
Tel: 02-96901230 Fax: 02-96901381
Email: asiet@peg.apc.org
Homepage: www.peg.apc.org/~asiet

Trotsky on Imperialism

CRITICISING the one-sidedness of the Stalinist "Draft Programme of the Communist International" published in 1928, Trotsky wrote:

"Capitalism gains mastery only gradually over the inherited unevenness, breaking and altering it, employing therein its own means and methods. In contrast to the economic systems which preceded it, capitalism inherently and constantly aims at economic expansion, at the penetration of new territories, the surmounting of economic differences, the conversion of self-sufficient provincial and national economies into a system of financial interrelationships.

"Thereby it brings about their rapprochement and equalises the economic and cultural levels of the most progressive and the most backward countries. Without this main process, it would be impossible to conceive of the relative levelling out, first, of Europe with Great Britain, and then, of America with Europe; the industrialisation of the colonies, the diminishing gap between India and Great Britain, and all the consequences arising from the enumerated processes upon which is based not only the programme of the Communist International but also its very existence.

"By drawing the countries economically closer to one another and levelling out their stages of development, capitalism, however, operates by methods of its own, that is to say

by anarchist methods which constantly undermine its own work, set one country against another, and one branch of industry against another, developing some parts of world economy while hampering and throwing back the development of others. Only the correlation of these two fundamental tendencies – both of which arise from the nature of capitalism – explain to us the living texture of the historical process.

"Imperialism, thanks to the universality, penetrability, and mobility and the break-neck speed of the formation of finance capital as the driving force of imperialism, lends vigour to both these tendencies. Imperialism links up incomparably more rapidly and more deeply the individual national and continental units into a single entity, bringing them into the closest and most vital dependence upon each other and rendering their economic methods, social forms, and levels of development more identical. At the same time, it attains this 'goal' by such antagonistic methods, such tiger-leaps, and such raids upon backward countries and areas that the unification and levelling of world economy which it has affected, is upset by it even more violently and convulsively than in the preceding epochs."

(L.D.Trotsky: "The Third International After Lenin", New Park Publications, 1974, pp. 15 and 16.)