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World action against asbestos

By Bronwen Handyside

CAMPAIGNERS against the trade in and the use of asbestos are acting in an international campaign on 30 November.

The target of this demonstration is the G7 meeting in Seattle, USA where the Canadian government is mounting a challenge to the World Trade Organisation on the French government's white asbestos ban under "free trade" rules.

The main campaign group will be in Seattle, and pickets are being mounted in Europe and Japan. Construction Safety Campaign secretary, Tony O'Brien reports that he is getting inquiries from trade union and "green" campaigners all over the world.

Canada is now the main exporter of white asbestos, until recently allowed by European countries although blue and brown asbestos were banned in 1991.

After years of determined campaigning by construction unions and health and safety activists there is now a total ban on asbestos in the majority of European Union countries.

On 24 November Britain becomes the tenth EU country to impose the ban, and by 2 January 2005 the remaining five EU member states must also junk the killer substance.

British Labour minister of the environment, Michael Meacher issued a press release: "We have always said that we would move to ban the import of white asbestos as soon as it was legally sound to do so."

O'Brien said: "Of course we are pleased at this success, but not sanguine. The results of exposure to asbestos are still killing 30 people a week in Britain alone. It is incomprehensible to any normal mind how it could be 'legal' to kill 30 people a week, and not 'legal' to ban asbestos! It is also incomprehensible how it could be made illegal in the USA and EU but remain legal in the poor countries."

In Britain the CSC and the Hazards Campaign, together with many victims and relatives' groups, battled against years of foot-dragging by trade union leaders, the Health and Safety Executive and the government for a complete ban.

In 1984 the Hazards Campaign

magazine was sued and bankrupted when it exposed an eminent occupational health consultant for his fondness for the asbestos industry.

Exposure to asbestos results in serious scarring of the lungs (asbestosis), lung cancer and mesothelioma. The highest rate of these diseases is among those who mine asbestos, and the next most at risk are construction workers.

The British Factory Inspectorate first wrote about the "evil" effects of asbestos dust in its 1898 Annual Report. But such is the capitalist drive for profit against the health and safety of workers that millions have died in the century since that report and millions will continue to die well into the next century.

Professor Julian Peto of the Institute of Cancer Research says: "Asbestos use in the building and engineering industries peaked around 1970 when men born in 1950 were starting their working lives. We are only beginning to see the effects of this as the disease usually takes about 20 to 60 years to develop."

Over 2,000 sufferers from asbestos-related diseases in South Africa are trying to win compensation from Cape (UK) Ltd which mined and processed asbestos there for 90 years. Long after the dangers of asbestos were known, workers handled the substance with no protection.

But imperialist Britain was careful about its own protection! The judges have ruled that under British law a British company cannot be held accountable "at home" for their negligence overseas! South African workers, mostly black, are now dying in abject poverty while Cape goes scot free.

Rory O'Neill of Hazards magazine gives a stark warning. He says: "I think the EU action in banning asbestos will inevitably lead to the international asbestos industry increasing its production and marketing drive in the developing world. It is a dying industry's last hope. Russia at the moment is the number one producer nation."

The CSC picket is outside Canada House in Trafalgar Square, London from 12 noon to 1 p.m. on 30 November. For more information of the international campaign e-mail: construction.safetycampaign@talk21.com



Picture courtesy of Socialist Action (US)

Save Mumia Abu-Jamal

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

EDITORIAL

Right-wing electoral gains in Europe

RECENT ELECTORAL advances by parties of the extreme right in Europe are a warning to workers everywhere. The Austrian Progress Party of Jorg Haider came second in a recent general election, while the Swiss People's Party won over 20 per cent of the popular vote. This continues the trend which has made the French Front Nationale a significant political force these last few years, despite the recent fall in their vote. In Germany, too, small right-wing parties have been winning seats in regional parliaments this autumn, although this has been somewhat eclipsed by the gains of the Conservative CDU and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successors to the East German Stalinist party. Despite loud denials, these parties are the modern form of fascism. At the very least their electoral successes will encourage and embolden the thugs in and out of uniform who terrorise and frequently murder black people, refugees and asylum-seekers. Workers' International supports all healthy initiatives to combat fascism and the fascists. We alert workers everywhere to the need to set up workers' and migrants' own defence squads to fight them. These parties of the right are open racists and xenophobes. They demand that the people of Austrian (or French or British or Swiss or German) birth and descent should "come first". This works against the internationalism in consciousness and action which workers need to defend their jobs, living standards and very existence. Such parties attack migrants and asylum seekers, obscuring the fact that they are fleeing the results of the crisis of imperialism and claiming that they come to enjoy social and welfare benefits to which they have no "entitlement". They claim that migrant workers take away jobs which should be available to locally-born workers and that their families and children occupy school places and hospital beds which rightfully belong to local people. Thus they mobilise workers and the middle class to see foreigners as the cause of their problems. But jobs are swallowed up by capitalists forced by their system to maximise profits. Spending on schools and hospitals is controlled by capitalist politicians who are cutting taxation and government spending on welfare to create favourable conditions for "business". European capitalists are forced by international competition to come together and make a tremendous effort to overcome historical divisions, using their united strength to dominate in world markets. The European Union and the single currency have accelerated the imposition of "supply side" reforms favourable to capital, cheapening labour, "restructuring" industries to cut jobs, de-skill the work-force and slice away at social provision in the name of harmonisation. Not a small part of the right-wing vote in Europe is opposition to the capitalist path to European integration. But these movements and parties divert workers and middle-class people from understanding that capitalism is the root of their problems, and mobilise potential reservoirs of thugs who can be counted on as strike-breakers and disrupters of socialist and environmental protests. To a large extent, at the moment, the votes these parties gather are protests against the break-up of the gains workers made in the post-war period in Europe, gains which created better conditions not just for workers but also for a lot of the professional, commercial and intellectual middle classes. Established political parties, conservative, social-democratic and liberal, are more and more seen as corrupt hypocrites who exploit democratic politics for their own enrichment. Politicians like Haider in Austria and Ueli Maurer and Christopher Blocher in Switzerland and others in several countries, try to make political capital by "crusading" against corruption and high taxes, which are issues intended to mobilise a confused and resentful middle class. But the roots of corruption lie in capital itself. And all the chatter about "globalisation" only makes it clearer than ever that governments have to jump when capital says "jump", whatever the opinion polls or the ballot boxes say. The Haiders and the Le Pens come to the fore to twist and pollute with their racism such protest movements which emerge at first in a very basic and undifferentiated form. They can get away with it for two reasons. First, all bourgeois politicians, including so-called "socialists" and "Labourites", share their hateful prejudices. All Europe's official politicians are conspiring to scapegoat refugees and asylum seekers, showing what a mockery is the United Nations declaration of human rights. The British "Labour" government is particularly to blame, planning to keep asylum seekers in detention camps and simplifying and speeding up procedures for rejecting their applications for asylum and simply throwing them out. Any defences asylum seekers have had against such summary procedures have been whittled away over time. The Blair government will also force asylum seekers to live in a particular town or area and, while denying them the right to work, limit to the very minimum the food, clothing and shelter doled out to them through the welfare system. The second reason is that there is at present no party of the working class which can orient the movement towards attacking its real enemy – capitalism – and establish in practice the unity and strength of the working class. Such a party must be created in a struggle against every tendency – and there are and will be many – to place sectional interests above the interests of the world working class as a whole. Establishing such an international party of the working class is a major responsibility for workers and socialists everywhere. The Workers International to Rebuild the Forth International devotes its entire activity to fulfilling this task.

The man from Delmonte wages war on unionists

by Colin Pendleton

TRADE UNIONISTS who dared to take on the powerful multinational Del Monte fruit company have been attacked by well-armed gangsters, and forced to flee with their families. The reign of terror was unleashed in Guatemala, the Central American republic that has been dominated by big United States fruit interests for almost a century. A report in the London *Independent* on October 26 says the gunmen emerged two weeks previously, on the night before a planned ten-day strike to protest the lay-off of 900 contract labourers employed at three Del Monte farms. Some 200 men with high-calibre assault weapons arrived at the union hall in Morales. "They grabbed two members of the executive committee and forced them at gun point to drive to the home of the union's general secretary, who was pistol-whipped and dragged out back to the meeting, along with two others. In all, five union leaders were taken captive and at least 25 work place union reps witnessed the attack." The *Independent* report links the incident with the "banana wars", caused by a 15 per cent fall in real prices, with the US administration pressing European Union countries to stop favouring producers in the Caribbean and buy more from the mainly-US owned companies with plantations in Latin America. Despite damage to Guatemalan plantations by Hurricane Mitch, there is a glut. It quotes a plantation manag-

er: "You need an outlet for all that fruit. That's why people fight so hard to protect their markets." Following similar practices to the other big US producer, Chiquita, Del Monte is renting out three plantations in the Morales district to "independent" producers. The banana workers' union, Sitrabi, rejected the mass sackings as a violation of its collective bargaining agreement but Del Monte insisted on going ahead. During the incident at the union hall, the leader of the armed men claimed Morales would become "a ghost town", and that the sole way to correct the problem was to kill all the union leaders. He ordered that the leaders be photographed so that they could be identified in future, then insisted that a radio message be transmitted telling the sacked workers to collect their redundancy pay and to get out of the plantations. All banana workers were to present themselves to their supervisors for work the next day as normal and the demonstration was cancelled, they said. After the broadcasts, the union officials were returned to the union hall where a lawyer was now captive. The gunmen instructed him to draft the union leaders' resignations, and cursed when he objected to its illegality. After the resignations were completed, the union reps were herded into the general assembly hall where the gunmen forced them to make filmed statements that the resignations were voluntary. A sign was forced into their hands, reading: "If

they want blood, blood will flow." Guatemala's labour minister, Luis Linares, whose earlier attempts to mediate were met with intransigence from the company, has called on Del Monte's subsidiary, Bandegua, to reject the forced resignations and declare all the lay-offs illegal. A company spokesman said that if the resignations were not voluntary, it would not accept them. From Guatemala City, where they have taken refuge in safe houses with their families, union representatives said they feared for their lives, and appealed for international solidarity. This is not the first time Del Monte has been linked with repressive anti-union policies. In 1997 the World Development Movement dumped a ton of banana skins on the doorstep of the company's offices in Kent, to protest the treatment of workers in Costa Rica. A WDM investigating team had reported that workers on Del Monte plantations there were facing pay cuts and victimisation, and being forced to denounce the union, SITRAP. Many plantation workers and fruit packers there had suffered health problems because of the massive use of now-banned pesticides where they were working. At Del Monte's Imperio and Carmen plantations the workers were called to mass meetings by the bosses, and warned they would face blacklisting if they had anything to do with the union. Del Monte said it would continue to use its own corporate "solidarismo" unions to deal with Costa Rican workers.

Swedish Nazis murder Militant

A SWEDISH trade-unionist has been murdered after exposing a neo-Nazi in the shopworkers' trade union "Handel". 41-year-old Björn Söderberg died at the door of his Stockholm flat with several bullets in his head. Police later arrested three neo-nazis suspected of the crime. Björn Söderberg was a member of the SAC, a militant independent union. While he was working for an office supplies company he discovered that a very well-known leader of the far-right National Socialist Front (NSF) was also working there.

The NSF has on several occasions been found guilty of violent behaviour. The neo-Nazi habitually listened to "White Power" music at work. He managed to get elected as a "Handel" union representative, and at that point Söderberg contacted the "Handel" leadership and went to the press to expose what was going on. "Handel" immediately decided to expel the neo-Nazi. Under Sweden's freedom of information laws, anyone can obtain copies of any passport photograph held by the government.

Söderberg's murderers received his photograph free and in the post so that they could be sure of shooting the right man. However, they thus supplied the police with their address, a vital clue which led to their arrest. SAC are campaigning against the murder to encourage "civil courage" in the workplace. Meanwhile the passport authorities have been approached by other neo-Nazis for the photographs of a dozen policemen and several journalists working for the anti-racist magazine "Expo".

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Workers International Draft Resolution published! Rebuild the international workers' movement

The draft resolution to be discussed at the Third Congress of Workers' International, to be held in the Spring of 2000, is now available. Below, we print the Introduction to the resolution.

THE resolution published here cost a great deal of time and effort. This was because the problems facing the working class at present are quite exceptional. The early part of this decade saw a major change in the world political situation and brought to maturity a historic crisis in the organisation, consciousness and leadership of the working class and socialist movement around the world.

Our resolution does not only have to deal with the situation of the working class and the socialist movement in the decade since the fall of the Soviet Union. We have every confidence that a rebirth of that movement – and on a stronger and healthier basis – is entirely possible. However, proper consideration of how it is to be done required rather more than a quick glance at the current state of the class struggle in one or two countries. We had to devote some careful thought to the experiences advanced workers and others have undergone in recent years before going on to evaluate and refine the Workers International's proposals for overcoming the crisis.

The resolution also has to consider the work of those who in one way or another claim to uphold the Marxist understanding of imperialism, recognising that in this sphere, too, the results of deformations at the hands of Stalinists and pseudo-Marxists have to be overcome. This task is also not resolved in a couple of sentences.

However, our resolution also has to

deal with the struggles among those in the Fourth International who are trying to turn towards solving the crisis of politics, organisation and leadership in the working class. As the most telling example of this crisis, in the midst of preparations for the Third Congress of the Workers International a strong liquidationist tendency within the organisation came very close to destroying it entirely. Our Resolution was prepared in a theoretical and material struggle to prevent that liquidation.

Over and above these problems, the text of the Resolution had to be prepared and elaborated amongst comrades who speak a variety of languages and – few enough in number in any case – have other urgent responsibilities to meet. We therefore do not apologise for presenting the English text of the Resolution more than a year later than anticipated.

When the first draft of the Resolution was being worked on, the economic crisis of 1997-1998 was at its height. While we have nothing to retract in what we say about how that crisis exposed the general features of the crisis of imperialism (and what it means for the working class and revolutionaries), there is naturally a great deal which ought to be added. Apparently the richer imperialist nations in the west have avoided the worst consequences of the crisis, floating like passengers in a luxuriously-appointed liner through a sea of economic misery in Asia, the former USSR, Africa and parts of Latin America. Ostensibly the countries of South East Asia are recovering from the worst effects of the crisis. The chaos and bloodshed in Indonesia, however, above all East Timor, show no sign yet of abating, while millions of people in the Far East are still living at or under the poverty line.

If one can talk of a certain recovery, it is at the price of millions of new recruits to the ranks of the unemployed internationally. This is a conse-

quence of the huge acceleration in the concentration and centralisation of enterprises in the process of so-called restructuring which inevitably means more closures and rationalisations. It also brings a considerable increase in the rate of exploitation, the surplus value extracted from the labour force.

Despite the desperate drive to increase exploitation, stock exchanges around the world remain extremely nervous. Worries about whether high share-prices can be sustained reflect the anarchic development of imperialism, which is unable to catch up and reverse the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, a tendency which underlies and mocks the proudly-announced increases in figures for production. The process of accumulation seems to go forward more hectically than ever, but the repeated warnings from Alan Greenspan of the US federal reserve board and many other stock-market experts are a constant reminder that the recovery can only be temporary.

The enormous cheapening of manufactured goods from the Far East has also considerably sharpened competition, adding further urgency to attacks on workers in the West by their "own" employers. The drive to "claw back" wages and fringe benefits, the attempts to dismantle the "social wage" paid in the form of health, education, public housing and comprehensive social welfare provision proceed everywhere. These immediately sharpen the difficulties workers have in defending their jobs, wages and living conditions while in the long run reinforcing the conditions for resolving the long-standing crisis of working-class organisation and leadership.

Recognising that it would be a Sisyphean labour to try to publish a Resolution that takes the very latest developments into account, we submit the Resolution as it stands for the consideration of all those who are trying to find a way to rebuild the political organisation and consciousness of the world working class. We

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Workers

to Rebuild the Fourth International

International



DRAFT

RESOLUTION

Rebuild the
international
workers'
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reproduce as an appendix the statements that the Workers' International has published on the wars in Kosovo and Chechnya and on the situation in East Timor. Our attitude to these events was informed by the general positions put forward in the Resolution and, although it would be better if we could write further chapters of the Resolution on these questions, the reader will at least be able

to check how consistently the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International has pursued its work.

"Rebuild the International Workers' Movement! Draft Resolution of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International", £2 plus 50p post and packing, from PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS

Stop execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

THE execution of Mumia Abu Jamal by lethal injection is set for 2 December.

Pennsylvania governor Thomas Ridge made the announcement on 13 October following the US Supreme Court's denial of Abu-Jamal's petition for a "writ of cretorari".

It is urgent to build the international movement in defence of Abu-Jamal.

In 1995, an international outcry against this racist travesty of justice led to his execution being postponed – ten days before it was due to be carried out.

On death row for 17 years, Abu-Jamal was convicted of killing a policeman in a racist stitch-up. His trial was a farce. It disregarded the forensic evidence, and relied on phoney and perjured testimony from intimidated witnesses. He was refused the right to act as his own attorney and kept out of court even though on trial for his life.

Join the campaign outspoken now!

The Fraternal Order of Police and "hanging judge" Albert Sabo are hell-bent on getting rid of Abu-Jamal, an articulate and outspoken anti-racist camapigner and journalist, he has continued to speak out and organise from prison.

In fighting style, he greeted the denial of his petition saying: "It was not unexpected that the Supreme Court would deny

my appeal...The struggle continues...we can't forget the old saying that the truth shall set you free. I'd be a fool not to."

Thousands of people have demonstrated throughout the USA. Rallies and demonstrations have been held internationally. These are coming together in an International Committee to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal. All those who defend Mumia Abu-Jamal are asked to sign an open letter (see insert). Unfortunately we do not have the space to publish the already long list of signatories, many in responsible positions in trade unions, from all over the world.

A delegation is taking this letter to Washington, and co-ordinated international days of action are being organised especially on the occasion of the return of the delegation.

In the US:

Fresno, California: Rally every Saturday until Mumia is released. Meet 3.00pm at the corner of Blackstone and Shaw.

Lawrence, Kansas: Carry signs and collect signatures every Saturday 1.00pm at 9th and Massachusetts.

Minneapolis, Minnesota: Meet every Wednesday 7.00pm at Arise! Bookstore, 2441



Lyndale Ave. S.

New York: meet 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month 7-9pm at International Action Centre, 39 West 14th St., rm 206.

Orlando, Florida: Meet every Saturday at 1pm at downtown library.

Pensacola, Florida: Meet every Monday 3.30. For details contact 850 458 5350.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: For information contact 4122 734 8315.

San Diego, California: Meet

every Tuesday at 5.00pm at City College in Room B105.

San Francisco, California: 11 December mass rally at Oakland Federal Building.

Santa Cruz, California: Meet every Monday at 6.30 at McHenry Library room 219 on UCSC campus.

Ukiah, California: 13 November 12.00 noon Rally at Alex Thomas Park, So. State Street.

Washington DC: Meet every Tuesday at 6.30 at "De Place" (404 H.St., NE).

In Europe:

Berlin: Demonstrate every Wednesday afternoon near the US embassy.

Kaiserslautern: Demonstrate 13 November.

Liverpool: Demonstrate Thursday 25 November, 6pm Church Street.

London: Meet 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Demonstrate Saturday 6 November 2.00pm Trafalgar Square.

As soon as news broke that Governor Ridge had signed the execution order, a banner of protest was raised in London's Trafalgar Square

Oslo: Stalls for Mumia every Saturday 1pm at Egertorvet, city centre.

Stockholm: Demonstrate Saturday 30 October, 2pm

Stop Press

A federal judge has issued a stay of execution. It will last until the end of proceedings in the Federal District Court. This is expected to be early next year.

John Archer at 90

Struggle in Britain for the Fourth International

By Dot Gibson

JOHN ARCHER, at the age of 90 and on the 65th anniversary of his first steps towards the Fourth International, spoke to an international group of friends and comrades in London on 30 October.

It is impossible to do justice, in a few words, to the carefully prepared and challenging text of John's address. However it will be published in full, and then we will be able to discuss the "Struggle in Britain for the Fourth International" among wider circles in the workers' movement.

The meeting was chaired by Bob Archer, John's son and editor of Workers International Press. He spoke briefly of growing up, with his brother Peter, in the home and life which John and Mary Archer created. He remembered the long walks, the love of the classics, the international conference at their house, so packed that there were Germans sleeping in the loft and Americans in the basement. Miners and other workers would turn up to discuss their problems and relay their experiences.

Jean-Pierre Barrois, a member of the General Council of the Fourth International, delivered a message from Pierre Lambert, veteran leader of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste. He spoke of fond memories and learning experiences working with John and Mary in Britain.

Stefan Cholewka, secretary of the National Committee against PFI and Privatisation, described the kind of political guidance John had given to younger socialist militants.

Typically John had insisted that tributes, and personal memories would be kept to a minimum. Also he invited



During a break in the meeting, John Archer chats with some younger comrades (left) Richard Price and (right) Paul Flewers.

discussion on his work after publication of the address. The main task of the day was to introduce this work, concentrating on his continuing struggle, with others, to build the Fourth International. He explained the impact of events on himself and his peers, actions relating to these events and his theoretical conceptions resulting from the development of Marxism in a study of them. John's address spanned seven decades.

He helped us to see how difficult it was for young and inexperienced socialists to try to understand how, after the great victory of the Russian

Revolution, Hitler could rise to power and defeat the powerful German working class. We have read or heard about the Moscow Trials, when Stalin's victims "confessed" to having plotted with Trotskyists to help Hitler, and about the Stalin-Hitler pact. Listening to John, we were able to get a taste of the situation in which his generation, while trying to understand and explain, had to cope with the tragic effect of these events on workers and socialists at the time.

John traced the recovery of the British labour movement after the defeats of the general strike in 1926

and Ramsey MacDonald's government in 1931, with the subsequent rise of Labour's youth movement. He showed the connection of the struggle for Marxism and developments in the British labour movement: the Marxist group in the Independent Labour Party and Aneurin Bevan's founding of Tribune. He spoke of the struggle for working-class independence in the midst of the Second World War, what this meant for Trotskyist organisation; the development of work in the Labour party in the 1950s with "The Club" and its newspaper Socialist Outlook.

Inter-twined with explanations of workers' struggles in Britain and internationally over the decades, John talked of the development of differences and divisions in the Fourth International and his own place within them up until the present time.

It is here that we come to the main thrust of his work. He develops the view that throughout the whole period it was the task of Marxists in Britain to work in the main political organisation of the working class — the Labour Party. He says that pulling out of that work in the 1960s was the seed of the downfall of the organisation led by Gerry Healy (the Socialist Labour League and then the Workers Revolutionary Party), and also later, of that led by Ted Grant (Militant Labour and now the Socialist Party). Nevertheless he believes that the demise of these groups had a profoundly negative effect on the workers' movement.

John says that for Trotskyists in Britain it could never be a question of working in the Labour Party for a short time, what was necessary was the patient development of entrism until the inevitable break with Labour by the working class itself. Perhaps the end of the 1990s is the beginning of that break. John's appeal to all comrades is: study and prepare!

Israeli Press boss accused of murder plot

by David Dorfman

A TOP Israeli press and property magnate has stepped down from his directorships amid reports that he is being investigated for conspiracy to have rival newspaper owners murdered. Ofer Nimrodi, owner of the evening paper *Ma'ariv*, is alleged to have solicited the murder of Amos Schocken, publisher of the daily *Ha'aretz*, and Arnon Mozes, who publishes the evening paper *Yediot Ahronot*. He is also being accused of plotting the murder of a private investigator, who was to be offered an assignment in Thailand, then killed there. The plot failed when the investigator turned down the job.

Nimrodi, who took over *Ma'ariv* after its previous owner Robert Maxwell died in mysterious circumstances, has just served four months in jail for illegal wiretapping of competitors and government officials, and attempting to pervert the course of justice. Three senior police officers have been arrested on suspicion of selling information to him about the current investigations.

Declaring that he would devote his time to refuting

these "baseless allegations", Nimrodi has handed over his chairmanship of *Ma'ariv* Holdings to his father, Ya'akov, a former Mossad intelligence agent and arms dealer. He has also resigned as managing director of the Israel Land Development Corporation (Hachsharat Ha'yeshuv), a former Zionist institution which became the country's biggest urban property company and was privatised.

Nimrodi's lawyers blame the murder allegations on Rafi Friedan, a private investigator serving a prison sentence for his part in the wire-tapping affair. It is reported that Friedan turned over incriminating information on Nimrodi after failing to blackmail the press baron. The only condition he asked was that he should not be charged for his involvement, and that the tax authorities stop pursuing a case against him for alleged tax offences. According to Friedan, Nimrodi asked him to procure the death of a fellow investigator, Yaacov Tzur, who turned state's witness and gave evidence which helped secure convictions in the wire-tapping case.

The Nimrodi case could prove one of the biggest scandals in the recent histo-

ry of the Zionist state, not just because of the murder allegations but because of the prominence of the interests involved. *Ma'ariv* is one of the country's top papers, pre-dating the State itself. Nimrodi's other main interest, the ILDC, started life as an instrument for Zionist settlement in 1909, when Palestine was still under Turkish rule. It began issuing shares in 1953, soon after the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange was launched. By the end of 1987 it was engaged in property development, property rental, mainly of business premises, and hotels. It was also apparently losing millions. Meanwhile, 43 per cent of its ordinary shares had been acquired by a foreign group for which Ehud Olmert, now mayor of Jerusalem, and a leading member of the Likud party, was fronting.

It then emerged that the buyer was a company controlled by Ya'acov Nimrodi, a former Mossad station head in Tehran, who made his millions selling arms. Nimrodi senior was involved in the notorious Iran-Contra affair, when Israeli arms dealers acted as middlemen for a three-way deal enabling the Reagan administration in Washington to ignore

Congress and its own arms embargo, shipping weapons to Iran and funding the Contra terrorists fighting in Nicaragua.

On February 14, 1988, in line with privatisation policies, the Jewish Agency, a quasi-governmental body which serves as executive arm of the World Zionist Congress, sold Nimrodi its founders shares in the ILDC, for \$5.6 million. Nimrodi thus obtained full control over ILDC for \$26 million. In October 1989, Ofer Nimrodi's salary was boosted to NIS 41,000 a month, or, NIS 114,000 in today's terms. The company also paid Ofer, and Ya'acov Nimrodi's two sons-in-law, NIS 450K apiece (in today's money) for their personal cars and then gave them their cars to use in their work. The Nimrodis continued to withdraw huge sums from ILDC over the years. This has further devalued the company's stock in the eyes of investors. Now the allegations of murder conspiracy, on top of wiretapping, suggest that not only have the Nimrodis had their hand in the till, but Nimrodi junior has brought home the methods for which Nimrodi senior's old firm, Mossad, is noted abroad.

Milosevic seen behind attempt to murder editor

SERBIAN leader Slobodan Milosevic is being seen as Number 1 suspect behind the attempted murder of a newspaper editor who opposed his regime. Zeljko Kopanja, whose paper *Nezavisne Novine* (Independent News) is published in Banja Luka, in the Bosnian Serb Republika Srpska, was blown up by a car bomb on Friday, October 21. Kopanja lost both legs in the explosion, and was close to losing his life.

"Has there been any statement from the Socialist Party of Serbia?", he asked the reporters by his bedside as he recovered consciousness.

There had not. The so-called Socialist Party is Milosevic's party, and neither Kopanja nor his deputy Radmilo Sipovac have much doubt that the bombing was ordered from Belgrade. Vuk Draskovic, leader of the opposition Serb Renewal Movement (SPO) has condemned the attack, linking it with the car crash in which his brother was killed and he himself injured, which he says was an attempted assassination.

Serbia has strict press laws enabling the government to clamp down on

any criticism. A Belgrade paper was heavily fined last month for publishing allegations of relief funds being embezzled.

But the laws don't apply in Republika Srpska. On September 21, Serb police confiscated all copies of a Banja Luka weekly magazine, *Reporter*, at the border. It carried an article headed "They robbed Serbia", about Milosevic's wealthy cronies, and how they have moved funds abroad.

On October 16 the magazine, which had a circulation of 15,000 in Serbia, was permanently banned. The Association of Independent Electronic Media of Serbia, ANEM, has issued a statement condemning the ban.

Every week for the past year *Nezavisne Novine* has carried articles critical of the Milosevic regime and its Greater Serbia aims. Aleksander Tijanic, a well-known Belgrade journalist who used to be close to Milosevic and his wife Mira Markovic, has a regular column slating the Serb leader.

Tijanic had a column in *Dnevni Telegraph*, the Belgrade daily whose owner-editor Slavko Curuvija was gunned

down in April.

Besides criticising Milosevic's government, the Banja Luka weekly has provided a platform for Serbian opposition, and in a recent issue it reported on the 350-hectare property with electrified fence which Milosevic's son Marko has allegedly purchased in South Africa.

But Kopanja may also have been "punished" for having published a series of articles about the war crimes committed by Serb nationalists against Bosniaks and Croats during the Bosnian war. At the end of August this year, *Nezavisne Novine* described how 200 Bosniaks from the Prijedor municipality were killed on the Korican cliffs on Mount Vlasica on August 22 1992.

It blamed "a group of policemen from the reserve corps of the Prijedor interior ministry", and said there had been a cover-up by officials at Banja Luka's Security Services Centre and General Bogdan Subotic, the then Defence Minister. Subotic still lives in Banja Luka, though he has since retired and is no longer a figure of political importance.

Livingstone wants to stand for London

By Dot Gibson

THE last thing Tony Blair wants is a mayor of London who challenges his government's policy from the left.

When he took office in 1997, after 18 years of Tory governments, the anti-trade union laws and privatisation of major public assets were already established practice. The impoverishment of low paid workers, the unemployed, elderly, sick and disabled people had already set in. The Trades Union Congress had already accepted that there would be no change in the Tory anti-trade union laws.

The German Schroeder and the French Jospin look at him with envy. Their social democratic governments are faced with the enormous headache of having to lead the attack on workers' trade union and social rights, wages and conditions to comply with the Maastricht criteria and prepare for the capitalist European Union.

But, suddenly, having got

The Blair government is faced with the possibility of a major revolt

support for his big business policies at the TUC and Labour Party conferences this year, the Blair government is faced with the possibility of a major revolt in the Labour Party and trade union movement. This arises over what appears at first glance to be a pretty minor issue — the election of a mayor for London.

As soon as Tony Blair proposed the innovation of a mayor for Britain's capital — a figurehead with not too many powers — Ken Livingstone MP announced his interest in standing for this position.

This was no surprise. Livingstone rose to fame as leader of the Labour-controlled Greater London Council (GLC) in the 1980s until Thatcher closed it down. He was labelled by the capitalist press "Red Ken", a name which backfired on them as millions of workers throughout the capital fondly accepted it as their own.

In the midst of the Tory government's cuts and attacks on workers' rights, the GLC, under Livingstone showed there was another road forward. He brought in cheap fares on London Transport buses and underground, taking thousands of

cars off the road and putting thousands of passengers onto public transport.

Also, among other things, he awarded financial grants for the creation of Labour and Trade Union Resource Centres and destroyed the old grading structure of GLC employees, giving workers the right to day release for further education so that they could apply for better jobs. He carried though anti-racist policies and publicly met representatives of the Sinn Féin. He opened up the GLC buildings and its meetings to the public, encouraging maximum participation in the affairs of the capital.

When Thatcher announced the government's decision to close the GLC, millions of angry Londoners were ready and willing to fight back. Thousands of outraged Council tenants, whose dreams of a decent roof over their heads had been fulfilled, and workers whose jobs had been improved and secured were prepared to occupy the Council offices against the government's bailiffs.

The Kinnock Labour leadership and the TUC were more than agitated. They were frightened that if Livingstone made a stand this could bring forward a mass movement throughout the city, give encouragement to every other council under attack and, most important, strengthen the National Union of Mineworkers whose members were locked in battle with police in their year-long strike under the leadership of Arthur Scargill.

Kinnock launched a massive witch-hunt against

Over 70 per cent of voters are against tube privatisation and want the re-nationalisation of Railtrack and the private train operators.

Livingstone, Scargill and Labour councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool who refused to accept the Tory cuts in public services and were served with massive fines.

To his shame Livingstone did not act to unite the

movement against the Tories, Labour's right wing and the TUC. He backed down from the fight to defend the GLC and accepted a safe seat in Parliament. The working class as a whole has paid dearly for this failure to give leadership to unite the militant mass movement that existed at that time.

This year Livingstone did not make a stand against imperialism in the Balkans. He supported the Blair leadership over the NATO bombing of Serbia. However, although the British working class does not forget, it is well known for giving its "wayward sons" the benefit of the doubt.

Livingstone says he will stand in the election for mayor on a policy against the Labour government's plans to privatise London Underground, and at the same time he wants to be Labour's official candidate!

For this he is drawing big support from Labour Party members whose initial shock at realising that "their" government is pro-capitalist is now turning to anger. Over 600 of them packed into the Camden Centre at 12 noon on Saturday 30 November to support Livingstone.

Polls show that over 60 per cent of Londoners want Livingstone as mayor, and, after the Paddington train crash, opposition to privatisation is growing. Over 70 per cent of voters are against tube privatisation and want the re-nationalisation of Railtrack and the private train operators.

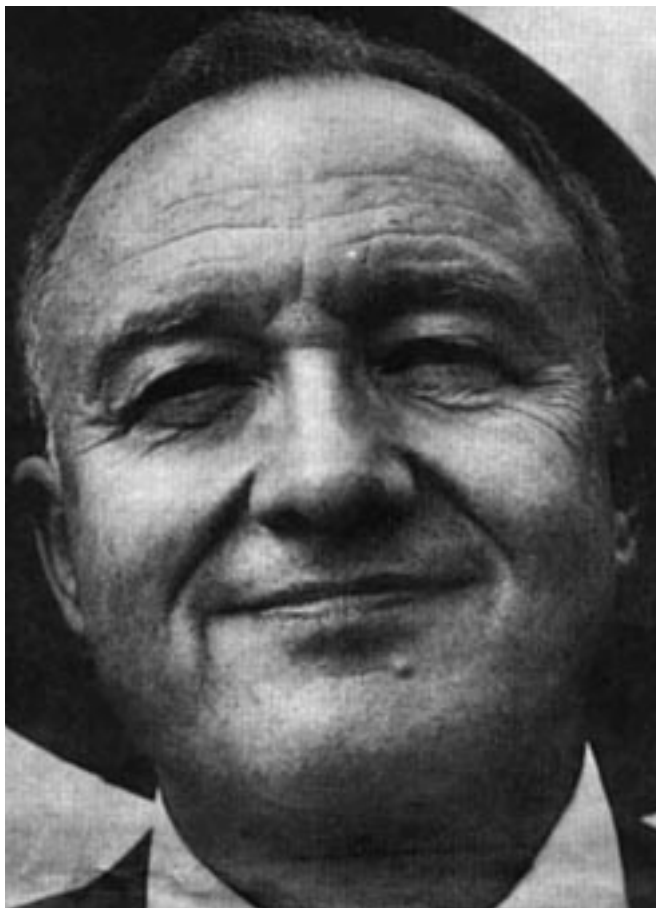
The right-wing is in a Catch-22 situation.

- If Blair allows Livingstone to get on the list he faces the possibility of him winning the vote and becoming Labour's official candidate.

- If Blair prevents Livingstone from getting on the list he cannot be certain that he will not stand as an independent against Labour and take thousands of party members with him.

The "Millbank machine", as Labour Party headquarters is called, has moved into action. The democratic decision of the London Labour Party conference held in May 1999 for "one-member-one-vote" to choose their Mayoral candidate has been overturned. This has been replaced with the "electoral college" method used to defeat the rank-and file's favourite in the Welsh Assembly elections.

The "college" is comprised of (a) Labour Party members, (b) trade union bloc votes, (c) MPs and MEPs (who get 1,000 votes each!).



Ken Livingstone: The most popular candidate for mayor of London has made a clear pledge to fight privatisation of the Underground.

joined Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (SLP) when it offered to be that kind of alternative. However the SLP has now virtually disappeared without trace.

The campaign for Livingstone in the Labour Party and trade unions is growing and must be supported by all workers and socialists. It is beginning to unite all socialist opposition to the Blair government far beyond the limits of the Labour Party. Although left reformist in character, this movement cannot simply sidestep the historic crisis of working-class revolutionary leadership.

Should Livingstone be forced to stand as an independent, a new working-class party will be immediately on the agenda as he and thousands of Labour Party members are expelled. But whatever the outcome of the dispute over the election of a London mayor, the working class continues to face the fundamental task of the necessity to build its own new internationalist socialist party.

We believe that such a party must be a party of the vanguard of the working class. First and foremost it must assemble the best leaders and organisers of the fighting working class and it must draw into its ranks those revolutionary socialists and groups from various organisations who are fighting to defend and develop Marxism.

We must grasp every possibility to discuss and act on the vital necessity of building a new working-class socialist party. It is most important now for all the elements within this movement to carry forward this discussion in an open and non-sectarian way whilst fighting together in defence of Labour Party members and Ken Livingstone's democratic rights.

However, every trade union, except the ultra-right wing AEEU, has announced they will ballot their members individually and recommend a vote for Livingstone. Now Millbank is trying to exclude unions who did not pay their affiliation fees to the Labour party on time. The sparks are expected to fly in the next few weeks as trade

The campaign for Livingstone is growing and must be supported by all workers and socialists

unions singled out for "the treatment" vent their anger.

Behind-the-scenes pressure by Millbank has meant the withdrawal of Blair's original favourites, and the resignation as Health Minister of Frank Dobson MP who is now the right wing's front runner. Glenda Jackson MP is still in the ring, but it is generally understood that Blair needs her to ensure that a ballot does take place if Livingstone is refused a place on the list.

More anger has erupted as Millbank is accused of contravening the Data Protection Act. Individual members of the Labour Party have received letters from Dobson clearly using

the Labour Party's central data-bank, so far denied to Livingstone.

But all these manoeuvres and manipulations are only a pale reflection of the turmoil underlying the crisis in the Labour Party.

During the 18 years of Tory governments the majority of Labour Party members and trade unionists did their best to build solidarity actions against rotten trade union leaders who refused to break the Tory anti-trade union laws in defence of workers' basic rights. They built support groups, travelled the country to join picket lines and demonstrations, they collected money, gave hospitality to strikers, demonstrated against racist asylum laws and in solidarity with workers in other countries.

It is difficult for workers in other European countries to understand, but at the same time these Labour Party members remained loyal to the party. Even when they saw Blair recruiting the middle class, bringing in "men in suits" to control Millbank and courting big businessmen, like Rupert Murdoch, the hated owner of the strike-breaking Sun newspaper, most working class Labour party members thought that everything would change once they got "their own" government.

After two-and-a-half years of Blair even the most patient of these members admit that this is an unashamedly pro-capital government. That does not mean that they have given up their belief in reformism. Most of them are looking for a "real" Labour government, and some of them

Stop the SWAPO Govt's People of the Caprivi

Statement by the Alliance of the South West African National Union (SWANU) and the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP)

FRONT page pictures of Mwalima's disfigured face with a broken jaw and his severely cut-up body disclosed the open secret: who was on the loose in the Caprivi.

None other than the torture and killer squads of Jesus Awala, the Butcher of Lubango himself, but now renamed the Special Field Force.

Namibia is a country of superlatives. We — with a population of 1.8 million — were accredited of having the best democracy in Africa and now we have the most brutal pseudo-democracy in the world with psychopaths at its helm.

We should add one more. We also have one of the most pathetic oppositions.

To add to the parody of democracy, exactly ten years ago, also in July-August, victims of the same torturers paraded around the country showing identical scars to their bodies. Now ten years later the exact same trade mark is left on the bodies of Caprivians under the pretext of defending a unitary Namibia.

The victims now however are no longer just SWAPO members but include Ovambo, white and Caprivian. This is the message, clear and simple: the Special Field Force and the army are here not to defend Namibia but to brutalise and repress Namibians.

The events in the Caprivi have established Namibia firmly as yet another unstable African country. This means that we must attempt to understand what is really happening to us.

What are the root causes of our sliding into barbarism and paramilitary dictatorship?

IN 1884-85, the west European imperialist powers decided to carve up Africa. In the process they divided families, tribes and peoples. Africa is the continent of straight-line boundaries.

After independence the African states remained servants to these imperialist powers and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) consequently followed the policy of "non-interference" in which arch-reactionary states proceeded to oppress peoples within its "sovereign" boundaries in the ser-

vice of imperialism and also in their own interests.

In this way the OAU defended the imperialist carve-up of Africa.

The root cause of the inherent instability of African states lies in the form of exploitation. Multi-national companies from Europe and America use a country like Namibia mostly to extract raw materials which is a primary industry.

The profits are taken out of the country. Nothing of these profits are being used for secondary industry, that is, factories for permanent industrial development.

This is what happened in Tsumeb. The giant Goldfields company exploited the mineral wealth of this town for decades without investing in a single factory or other productive business, leaving the town in a shambles when they closed two years ago adding thousands of people to the unemployed population of Namibia. Moreover, these companies contribute almost nothing or very little to the essential services of health, education and housing.

Unemployment, homelessness, inadequate and deteriorating health services, corruption and general impoverishment lead these states into sociopolitical crises.

They attempt to maintain their rule through tribal repression and hence the country descends into a chaos of savage brutality. Poor kills poor and brother kills brother.

It is against this backdrop that one must understand the events in the Caprivi and the country as a whole.

Namibia at any standards must rate as a rich country. It produces about 30 kg of food per family per day in the form of fish, meat and other foodstuffs to a lesser degree.

Namibia's fishing industry is said to employ 400,000 Spaniards. The diamond industry employs a substantial proportion of India's 30,000 diamond cutters.

We are told that one gram of uranium buys 30,000 barrels of oil.

Despite all this wealth the number of unemployed rises by the day. In some areas it is already above 60 per cent.

These unemployed, most-

ly under their tribal leaderships, clamour for jobs from the government. The war veterans also demand jobs.

The government is scared and tries to provide fake jobs at very low pay for these former soldiers. In the process they disturb the tribal sentiments in the areas where it places these former soldiers.

The government, being politically bankrupt, does not make demands on the multi-national companies to pay for health, education and unemployment.

The tribal leaderships, being politically bankrupt themselves, have no programme for development and employment for their peoples. They use the anger of their people to prop up their political positions, and — in the case of Caprivi — with secessionist demands.

They also do not contest the rape of the country by the multi-national countries.

The opposition parties — or tribal alliances, which is what they are in reality — add to the growth of tribalism. They claim that the government only benefits the Ovambo people.

That is the alpha and the omega of their political understanding. Yet, the hard facts make nonsense of their ridiculous claims.

The Ovambo people constitute the greater majority of the workforce.

If this state could lift their standard of life it would be a major progressive feat. The reality is that the average income of this group puts them third from the bottom among 13-14 tribal groupings.

The government obviously maintains a tribalist policy, not to benefit the greater majority of people but to keep its support base through the tribal hierarchies which it clearly benefits.

The consequence is that in the south, the Omaheke region, Damaraland and others the government has alienated support on a tribal basis.

Secessionist sentiments are rife, having been anticipated some years back by the arch-reactionary Rehoboth leadership.

The lesson is that if a national state does not benefit peoples, but only leads to increasing impoverishment and social crisis, minority

groups will find no commitment to the nation state.

That is, when they have no right to self-determination; little access to the national budget and development.

Under the present circumstances of the rape of the country and general government corruption it really does not matter whether Namibia is carved up into bantustans.

True democracy anyway recognises the right of peoples to self-determination up to and including the right to secede.

However, recognition does not mean agreement. In Namibia's case there is no oppressor nation. The nation can only address its political and economic problems on a national non-tribal basis.

The idea of secession in places like the Caprivi, without any industrial base and no working class is extremely reactionary and downright stupid.

However we have full understanding of the secessionist ideas among ordinary Caprivians. On this basis we reject the military suppression of the Caprivi's secessionism.

We say that secessionism is not the evil. It is the causes of exploitation and repression that are the root evils leading to secessionism.

Therefore the only way to combat secessionism in a country like Namibia is to recognise the right to self-determination which is the only way to build a unitary state worth the name.

It is on this ground that the opposition parties have exposed themselves as servile appendices of the government when they started to echo the war-cries and condemnation of the secessionists without a single mention of how this government became the cause when it sent in this repressive Special Field Force.

The brutality of this force became apparent when hundreds began to flee to Botswana.

With the support of the opposition, the government rode the crest of the waves with the jingoist defence of the unitary state.

A politically bankrupt regime without any meaningful solution to any problem will and can only con-

tain its crisis temporarily through dictatorship and war or civil disturbances.

This is what this government had begun to do: destabilise the country (aided by the secessionist leadership's own political bankruptcy) and then act on abstractions and the paper of the constitution.

The people were the first victims. As a liberation movement, SWAPO contained dissent through fear. It was clear that they were intent to spread fear through the country too and there were many small signs, small but significant, albeit not noticeable to a blind opposition.

A Special Field Force member running a shebeen shoots a woman in a Windhoek Shanty town; a presidential motorcade runs amok in the city; the Special Field Force is sent to Caprivi to terrorise the local population.

The opposition share criminal responsibility for sending the Special Field Force to Caprivi fully knowing that these were the same torturers of Lubango that they were unleashing upon the Caprivi people.

Their opportunism to

curry Njoma's favour was grotesque, their irresponsibility a dagger in the wounds of the nation.

The problem this time is that this regime is unchaining a situation in which it might not be the only perpetrator.

Perpetrator will in all likelihood become victim and victim might become perpetrator. In the fray foreign economic and political forces will stake their claim too.

The prospect is grim not only for the Namibian people, but also for the Nujoma terror regime. This is the situation that must be avoided at all costs.

For this reason we add our voice to those who condemn the presence of a killer army in Caprivi.

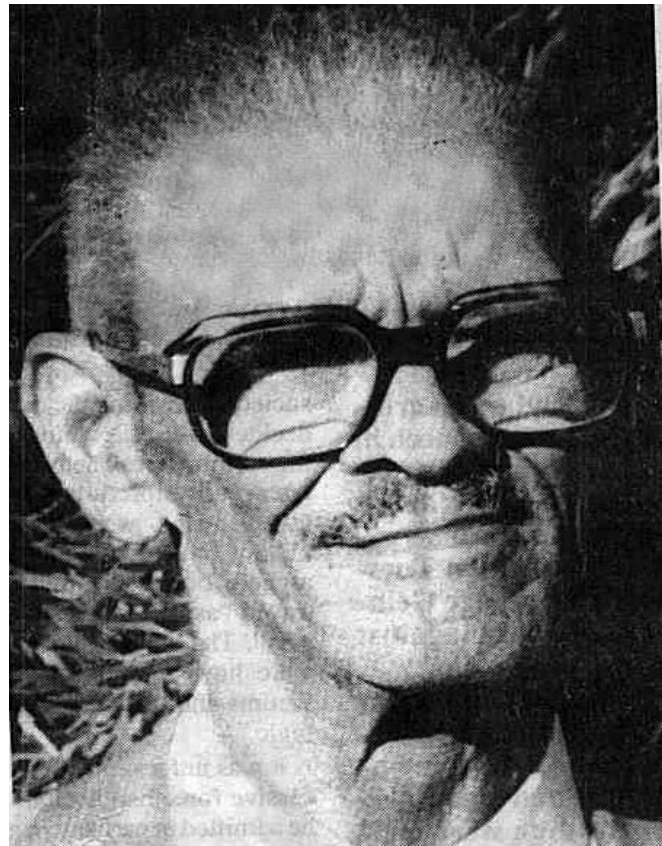
We say:

● **The army out of the Caprivi!**

● **Disband the Special Field Force of the Butcher of Lubango!**

Signed:

R. Kandando
H. Beukes



Hermanus Beukes

violence against the region!

THE Namibian South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) government sent in its Special Field Force to crush secessionists in the Caprivi region of the country. This Special Field Force is made up of former SWAPO security agents led by the Butcher of Lubango, Jesus Awala., who, in the 1970s and 1980s, kept thousands of young freedom fighters imprisoned in dungeons where they were tortured and where many died.

Leader of the secessionists, Mishake Muyongo was vice-president of SWAPO until 1982. He is also former president of the DTA (a party previously backed by South Africa). For the past year Muyongo has become politically isolated in the country due to his secessionist sentiments.

Having misled the people, he put up no political resistance when the SWAPO government's Special Field Force was sent to Caprivi compelling him and more than 2,000 of his supporters to flee.

On 2 August 1999 Caprivi secessionists launched an attack, killing eight soldiers and police. President Nujoma declared a state of emergency and about 500 people were arrested and tortured. They were beaten with sjamboks and other forms of tortures were also inflicted.

A former parliamentarian Geoffrey Mwilima was photographed with a scarred body, broken jaw and missing teeth by his lawyer, shocking the whole nation and isolating the government.

At first the opposition parties supported the government, with our alliance and the Herero Royal House being the only ones condemning the action and supporting the Caprivian people. With the savagery exposed the opposition parties hastily withdrew their support for the government. The state of emergency has now been lifted but the government faces many lawsuits.

The underlying reasons for the people's secessionist demands must be addressed .



Pictures like this photograph of Geoffrey Mwilima exposed the activities of the Special Field Force

The silence of President Nujoma

Nujoma at the receiving end of a stinging lashing

Mr. Hermanus Beukes will be 87 on his next birthday and is still an unrelenting campaigner for a better tomorrow for the country and its people. In his customary unsparing manner, he looks in the article below not only at President Nujoma but also the opposition parties, and concludes that the Council of Churches is composed of a "pathetic lot". Namibian youth, here is a shining example of resistance to social decay and rotten public management.

Windhoek Observer, 11 September 1999

At the time when opponents of apartheid were jailed, Senator Reuben cautioned Dr Verwoerd in the South African Parliament that action of that kind would eventually lead to resignation on the part of the nation, and that such a condition could only have disastrous consequences because, as long as the nation protests against wrongs committed by a government there was hope.

Such is the silence of the people in this country. The silence by the churches which are supposed to reprimand the heads of government and

the laxity of the so-called opposition parties are a tremendous source of worry because it was clear right from the start that this country is heading towards barbarism.

Now, with the events in the Caprivi, the opposition parties showed their absolute incompetence, which they had already shown in 1989 with the Constituent Assembly, as well as during the election which preceded independence. The opposition parties permitted a condition whereby political parties appointed the body, being the Constituent Assembly, while the requirements were that only the nation could compose such an assembly.

Thereafter, they allowed people standing in the shadow of criminal charges, which even entailed murder, as candidates in the election, something totally impermissible in a democracy. And apart from that, they allowed the sole right of the nation, being the approval of the constitution, was being violated in that they, the political parties, did the approval.

The second term of the government is busy running out, and I have never heard of an opposition party which has raised its voice in regard to the regions which have been neglected and deprived of development aid, as, for example, Rehoboth, where they, the authorities, are busy with expropriation.

And when an opposition party does come with a proposal in the interests of the nation, it is summarily wiped from the table by SWAPO which raises the argument that the

opposition tries to gain political coin. With that, the matter is settled.

Exactly the same happened in regard to pensions for the aged. Those who have sacrificed for the liberation struggle have today to be satisfied with 160 dollars a month and manage, while those in control are filled to the brim with good food and spend that amount of money on a month's condoms.

The events in the Caprivi were a lucid illustration of what had happened to Namibians in Lubango and elsewhere. President Nujoma was in control at all times. I followed the comments of the various political parties, as well as those of the Council of Churches, but not one referred to the person in command of those instances and institutions which had committed the horrors. Neither did one mention a cause why the Caprivians want to secede, except for Paramount Chief Riruako who said that SWAPO was reaping what it had sown, because SWAPO ignored the Caprivi.

The church leaders who today are the principals of the council of Churches constitute another pathetic lot. The horrors which are today being committed in this country by SWAPO could have been terminated as early as the 1970s if these church leaders had done their duties at the time, because as from that decade one heard the cries for help from the detention camps in Lubango and elsewhere. But they maintained a grave-like silence. My advice to those principals of the Council of Churches

is to reach Malachi Chapter 2 Verses 1-9. Read those verses and take note of your responsibilities and become wise.

And to the opposition parties: try to get away from the lie that SWAPO is the government of the country. Parliament is the government of the country, and you, the opposition parties, carry the same responsibility as the majority party. Another major lie was the reaction from your ranks that Namibians should comply with the culture of peace, tolerance and harmony which had been established in more than nine years in the country.

How is that possible in a country where robbery, pilferage, murder and slaying are the order of the day while you live in godless luxuries and the nation is in wretched misery?

You were in a hurry to accuse the Caprivian secessionists of high treason, but you are too lax and dishonest to admit that the Caprivians were forced by circumstances, as were spelt out by Chief Riruako. Now my question to you is: do you really believe you are doing Nujoma a favour by allowing him to continue with his inanities? Why? Is it fear to save your own backside or your inability to notice vital issues, that causes you to accuse the defence force and not Nujoma, the responsible person who is to be addressed?

It is the first time in my life that I hear that if a person wants to break away from something which he or she feels is causing injustice, it constitutes high treason. The Bible states quite clearly that you should find

your way even where the plagues settle.

So short-sighted and totally blind are you to see matters in the right perspective that you are even alleging that SWAPO has a two-thirds majority.

The truth is that SWAPO derived a majority from a drastically reduced number of voters.

In the first election in 1989, there were 700,000 registered voters of which more than 600,000 went to the polling booths. In the second election in 1994, more than 600,000 voters were registered, of which only 400,000 cast their votes.

This drastic dwindling in interest in the national elections, as well as elections on regional and local government levels, is clear proof that the nation has lost its confidence in this government.

The allegation that SWAPO has a two-thirds majority is nothing less than dishonesty to conceal the fact that the will of the nation is subordinate to that of the political opportunists.

The indifference being revealed in regard to the nation in your parliamentary debates, and the total regression of the country on all terrains, is evidence that you are seated in parliament for your own interests and are unable to govern the country.

The silence of President Nujoma on the Caprivian horrors has left a big question mark. Was it not Mr Nujoma who said his defence force would pursue dissidents into Zambia and Angola to destroy them?

London Families march against deaths in custody



Several hundred friends and relatives of people who have died in prison or police custody marched through Whitehall in London last month to hand in protests at the Prime Minister's home in Downing Street.

Since the murder of David Oluwale in Leeds in 1969, nearly two hundred black people have died at the hands of the police and the prison system.

The marchers, all dressed in mourning, behaved with quiet dignity throughout the demonstration and were an enormously impressive presence.

Although many black deaths in custody have happened under extremely suspicious circumstances, few of the police officers involved have faced criminal or disciplinary charges.

The United Friends and

Families Campaign demands a full and independent public inquiry into black deaths in custody so that the truth can emerge about how their loved ones died and those responsible can be brought to account.

Contact the campaign c/o Inquest: Ground Floor, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2PJ (Tel: 0370 432 439)



Movement for Socialism and the UN

The Free Kosova Committee was founded at a meeting in the National Liberal Club in London on 20 September this year. Its members come mainly from the Bosnia Institute, of which Branka Magas and Quintin Hoare are prominent members.

In the war in Bosnia, while we in Workers Aid for Bosnia were exposing and opposing the role of the United Nations and campaigning for the independence of the working class – the rebuilding of working-class internationalism, members of the Bosnia Institute demanded that the UN/NATO forces carry out bombing raids.

During the Kosova war, these people supported the NATO bombing. But this time there was another group among them – the leadership of the Movement for Socialism in Workers' Aid for Kosova marched behind the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack saying that this was the only way they could support the Kosovars! They told us that although they agreed with our opposition to imperialism, they could not voice it at that time because the Kosovars welcomed the "support" they were getting from NATO.

Liz Leicester and Anton Moctonian told us that, despite appearances, they were in full support of the Workers' International's opposition to NATO. Indeed, Workers Aid for Kosova had agreed a statement to that effect but they did not want to upset the Kosovars! When we asked them for a copy of this statement, they did not reply. If there was such a document, it was purely "for the record".

The Free Kosova Committee has now circulated its statement of principles signed by, among others, Michael Foot, Corin redgrave, John Austin MP, Francis Wheen and Bob Myers, Liz Leicester and Anton Moctonian.

Paragraph 8 of this document says: "Given the extensive destruction of Kosova's material infrastructure, economy, institutions, records and other basic needs of social existence, FKCA accepts the necessity of the present interim international authority" (i.e. NATO and the UN!—WIP) "whose task is to assist Kosova's economic and social recovery and to create a framework for the emergence of a democratic government representing all citizens on the basis of free and fair elections. The authority must also pursue war criminals, rebuild houses and clear landmines or unexploded bombs. A further important role is to reassure Kosova's Serb and other minority citizens. Its work must be open, transparent and fully accountable to the people of Kosova as well as to the parliaments of the countries providing its personnel. The interim period of tutelage should be of a strictly limited duration and subject to annual review."

And paragraph 9: "In the view of FKCA it is vital for representative leaders of the local population to be engaged from the outset in all discussions regarding Kosova's future, especially those relating to the mechanisms and structures of regional reconstruction and the European integration process. Kosova's defence forces should be included from the start in local and regional security arrangements established by the international community, which should provide them with training and supervision. There should be clear separation between political parties and depoliticised forces of order. The best hope of combating or preventing violence and criminality and of establishing the rule of law" (whose law? — WIP) "is to involve representative local forces in the implementation of these essential and urgent tasks."

The record speaks for itself!

Interview with Bajram Mustafa Defending social ownership

BAJRAM Mustafa is an engineer and a trade union member at the mine at Mitrovica in Kosova. He was prevented by the French government from attending a meeting in Paris organised by the trade union convoy to the Balkans on Saturday 18 September in Paris.

At this meeting, Bajram had hoped to describe to French trade unionists the attitude of the French Kfor troops in Mitrovica.

The interview reproduced here was finally carried out in London on 2 October and posted (in French) on the Workers' Aid website.

Can you introduce yourself?

Bajram Mustafa: I am 44 years old. My father was a bricklayer and my mother a housewife. I have two sisters and a brother, two half-brothers and two half-sisters.

I was very good at school as a child. That's how I won a scholarship to study engineering at Pristina university.

From 1978 to 1989 I worked for 11 years in the mines as a maintenance engineer.

All my mates were in the union. It made sense to me to get a union card. In any case under Tito every wage-earner in Yugoslavia was in a union.

In 1989 the miners went on strike and occupied the underground workings. The special police raided them

over a three-day period and I refused to help them get the miners out. I was sacked.

I found work as an assistant professor at Pristina university. Later I became full professor.

What is the relationship between the national question and the social question?

We trade unionists did not want to get involved in politics, but the government forced us to. A new constitution was brought into force in 1974 which gave Kosova a different status. Kosova was given the same rights as a republic, although it remained within Serbia. While I was at school and at university in the 1970s Kosova completely controlled the education system.

In 1981 the tensions between Serbs and Albanians grew stronger. There were demonstrations. The police and the army fired into the crowd. People were killed and injured. We started demanding that Kosova should become a full republic within Yugoslavia.

For their part the Serbs said they were the victims of genocide and started a struggle to put in question the province's autonomous status. Hysteria was whipped up. Segregation laws were brought in. Albanians were not allowed to buy agricultural land, flats or houses which had belonged to Serbs.

In 1987 Milosevic came to Pristina. There were incidents in the streets while he was meeting leaders of the Kosova Communist League. That was when he came out of the meeting to say no-one had the right to hit Serbs and that the battle to re-conquer Kosova had started.

In 1988 the Trepca miners organised a 12-kilometre-long march by 1,000 miners. The rest stayed down the pits. The local people joined in the demonstration. We wanted to stay in Yugoslavia but we wanted the rights of a full republic. We wanted to decide our own fate. We shouted "Tito!", "Tito!", "Yugoslavia!". We wanted equal rights.

In 1989, between 20 and 28 February, 2,000 miners on hunger-strike occupied the mine 550 metres below ground. They demanded that Kosova should be placed under the protection of the United Nations. The authorities pretended to give way, and when the miners came back up to the surface they took them and arrested them.

The whole population campaigned the demand the release of the miners (there were about 5,000 arrests). And then in March Serbia revoked Kosova's autonomous status.

A year later, on 28 February 1990, we decided to set up the independent miners' union, and in June 1990 the independent

unions in Kosova set up a federation.

In 1990, on 8 August, the Serb authorities closed the mine and stopped the miners from going down. On 3 September there was a general strike and 170,000 Albanians were sacked for striking.

What line does the independent miners' union follow?

The union has 1,400 members. There are two kinds of activity.

Defending social ownership of the mine and helping the miners and their families to live.

When the NATO bombing started we thought we would get the mine and our jobs back. But Kfor (which is French troops in Mitrovica) stopped us from re-entering the mine, explaining that the legal status of the mine is not clear.

Bearing in mind that argument, we asked that a team of 5 or 6 miners should be allowed into the pits. We wanted to examine the state they were in and assess the work needed to restart production.

As we have not been able to get into the mine, we do not know if there are any mass graves there, as the rumours say.

What about the future?

The miners are fighting and will fight. The mine belongs to them. They want to control it and work in it. They want to earn a wage and live off it.

Workers International Press comment

"Workers International Press" condemns assaults and murder committed in Kosova against unarmed Serbian civilians who are not suspected of war crimes.

We note with disgust attempts by the far right among Albanian Kosovars to intimidate and silence those in the country who have spoken out in their press against such attacks.

Naturally we support all attempts by Kosovars to return to the jobs and homes from which they were ejected by the racist Milosevic regime. However, we are against all forms of racism and

prejudice against innocent Serbians is precisely that.

We are also very much in favour of pursuing the political leaders of Serbia who did so much to foster and encourage rabid nationalism which resulted in a real attempt to annihilate part of the Albanian Kosovars in their own homeland and drive out the rest.

But those among the Kosovars who are trying to do the same to all their Serbian neighbours are only playing Milosevic's game. They are preparing a new bloody tragedy for the region.

Sweatshops become death-traps

It's the same old story, from West to East. Capitalist exploitation, sweatshop conditions, neglected safety, young women workers burned to death. — Charlie Pottins reports.

'The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred'.

ON THE afternoon of March 25, 1911, fire tore through the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York's lower East Side. All exits were locked, and passageways blocked by bails of cloth. The blaze killed 146 workers, mostly young women, and injured many more.

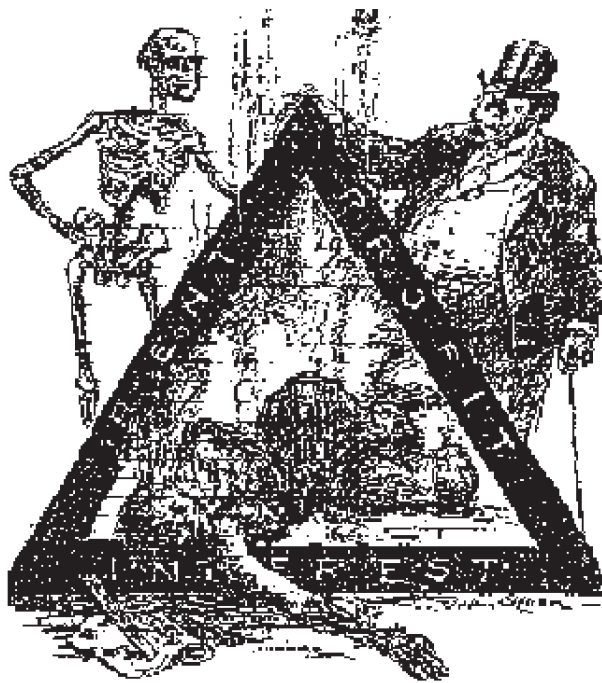
This horrific slaughter tore through the facade of fashion, exposing the sweatshop slavery of the women workers. There was a public outcry, appeals for funds for the injured, and calls for legislation. Workers returned from burying their dead to a bitter, more determined struggle for union rights and decent conditions.

Invited to address a rally at the Metropolitan Opera house, workers' leader Rose Schneiderman made no concessions to any notions the "respectable" among her audience might have harboured, of society being united by

screws and its instruments of torture with iron teeth. We know what these things are today: the iron teeth are our necessities, the thumbscrews the high-powered and swift machinery close to which we must work, and the rack is here in the firetrap structures that will destroy us the minute they catch on fire.

This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 143 of us are burned to death.

'We have tried you citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers and brothers and sisters by way of a charity gift. But



John Sloan drew this contemporary cartoon showing a triangle of rent, profit and interest causing the death of a Triangle clothing worker

Bangkok: 188 killed after union is busted

The year before the Triangle Waist fire, workers had tried to organise and been beaten by strikebreakers and cops. Among the union demands had been adequate fire exits. But the employer was more concerned with its "security" — in case someone stole a piece of material — than with workers' safety.

How much has capitalism really changed?

In 1993 there was a rerun of the Triangle fire, but worse, at the Kader toy factory in Bangkok, Thailand, part of a multi-national combine which produces toys for many internationally-known brandnames. The Bangkok factory made Barbie dolls. Most of the

workers were young women and girls, some were young enough to play with the dolls.

Workers had tried to organise a union at Kader, and complained about safety standards, but management sacked the leading union members and ignored their demands. Kader was well-in with the Thai authorities and knew how to avoid regulations. Windows at the factory were barred and doors were locked in case anyone stole a toy.

Despite previous fires, one of which in 1989 killed a worker and injured 30, Kaders fire alarms were out of order. There were no sprinklers nor any fire

exits. As in the Triangle fire, trapped workers were killed leaping from upper floors to the pavement below. Altogether 188 workers, all but 14 of them women, were killed in the blaze. Another 469 were injured, one-third of them permanently.

In New York after the Triangle fire the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union led a 100,000-strong demonstration to the legislature, demanding action. In Bangkok, every year, on May 10, trade unions and workers' welfare organisations march to remember those who died in the Kader fire and to publicise the continuing fight for workers' safety.

The strong hand of the law beats us back when we rise into the conditions that make life bearable.

the tragedy, but dealt with it forthrightly as a class issue, as this report from the New York Times records:

"Rose Schneiderman, who led the workers out of the Triangle factory in their strike two years ago and bailed them out after being arrested, found words difficult when she tried to speak. She stood silent for a moment and then began to speak hardly above a whisper. But the silence was such that everywhere they carried clearly:

'I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies,' began Miss Schneiderman after she had gained possession of her voice, 'if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting. The old Inquisition had its rack and its thumb-

every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable, the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us.

'Public officials have only words of warning to us — warning that we must be intensely orderly and must be intensely peaceable, and they have the workhouse just back of all their warnings. The strong hand of the law beats us back when we rise into the conditions that make life bearable.

'I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement'."

Sixteen killed in Hebron cigarette-lighter blaze

EMPLOYERS concerned only for profit are being blamed for the death of sixteen workers, mostly young women, in a factory fire in Hebron, Palestine, on Thursday, October 21.

A report in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* by correspondents Amira Hass and Amos Harel says the blaze in the unlicensed cigarette-lighter factory was apparently started when a lighter fell to the floor and exploded. As flames and thick black smoke poured out over the crowded neighbourhood, local people rushed to try and help the workers to escape, but were overcome, and had to be treated later for smoke inhalation.

Hebron fire brigade chief Nizar Jibari said the premises contained "large amounts" of lighter fluid.

The factory, in the basement of a three-storey building, had no emergency exits, and the front door was closed. Only two women managed to get out. Fifteen young women and one man were trapped and killed in the blaze. Local hospitals said some victims bodies were burned beyond recognition. It is understood the oldest woman was 35, and the rest were aged between 17 and 25.

Palestinian firefighters who were first on the scene were joined by an Israeli fire engine and ambulance crews. "To save lives, there are no borders," said Israeli fire chief Ilon Yitzhaki. Eyewitnesses say that it took fire-fighters around three hours to extinguish the blaze.

The factory was not insured. Hassan Barghuti, of the Centre for

Palestinian Democracy and Workers Rights says most workplaces in the Palestinian Authority-controlled areas lack basic insurance policies and are unsafe.

"According to Barghuti, it is impossible to estimate the number of uninsured and unlicensed factories in PA territory. Most of these factories are in heavily populated areas. More than 90 percent of children under 16 that are employed in such factories are uninsured.

"Barghuti estimates that the average monthly wage in these factories is no more than NIS 500 or 600, with long hours and a six day week. He says that factory owners must be made to realize that life and welfare come before profit." (report by Amira Hass and Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz* 22 October)

Land & Liberty

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

Hopes demolished

With great fanfare, Israel's Labour government, in the same week it hosted a visit by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, graciously opened a road corridor along which Palestinians with the necessary permits could travel from the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The route is carefully guarded, lest any Palestinians from Gaza refugee camps be tempted to stray off the prescribed road, to visit the homes they once had within what is now the State of Israel.

With somewhat less international publicity, the Israeli paper *Ma'ariv* report-

of Hebron by armed Israeli soldiers, who were considerate enough to give them an hour to clear out their belongings. Of course, it could not be done, and when the bulldozers moved in to tear down the walls, they buried furniture, clothes, children's toys, in the rub-

planning matter. A conference last year in the village of Deir el-Assad, Galilee, was told that 12,000 Arab homes within the State of Israel were threatened with demolition. Successive Israeli governments have simply extended to the occupied territories the dis-

is demolished in East Jerusalem, despite prior agreements

B y Nina Pinto, Ha'aretz Correspondent and AP (26 October)

The home of three families numbering 18 people, in the East Jerusalem village of Beit Hanina, was demolished yesterday under an Interior Ministry directive. The action came despite an agreement between the Jerusalem municipality and the Beit Hanina administration, according to which no new illegal structures would be built and no existing buildings would be demolished. The municipality said the Jerusalem district of the Interior Ministry stopped cooperation over illegal construction in the eastern part of the city. Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami is said to oppose such home demolitions, but he authorized yesterday's destruction. The three families moved into a tent near the site of their former home. The owner of the house said he had been warned by police that his home would be demolished but had obtained an order against it. Since Ehud Barak took office, only four Palestinian homes have been razed. Faisal Husseini, the Palestine Authority official for Jerusalem, said that the demolition was a violation of an agreement between the Palestinians and Israel. 'What they have demolished is not just this house but also the peace process and the credibility of this government, which promised not to demolish any house in East Jerusalem,' Husseini said.



Eighteen-month-old Wa'ad al-Awash in front of her newly-demolished home

ed on October 22 that as his opening gambit in forthcoming negotiations with the PLO, prime minister Ehud Barak would offer the Palestinians a state on 18 per cent of the occupied territories. Veteran Israeli journalist and former Knesset member Uri Avneri was disgusted, commenting, "... 18% of the 'territories' occupied by Israel in 1967 are less than 4% (four percent!) of the territory of Palestine under the British Mandate. In such a territory, which will be cut up into enclaves, it is impossible to create a viable state, not even a mini-state. It is hardly enough for a Bantustan - the name given to the black 'homelands' by their white masters in the former South Africa. ...

... The same minds in the Prime Minister's office that hatched this foolish idea are now busy preaching 'separation'. This is a negative term. 'Divide and impera' is an ancient cynical slogan. 'Separation' is the translation of the Afrikaans word *Apartheid*. 'High fences make good neighbors', a saying frequently quoted by Mr. Barak, is a fetching, but dangerous, slogan. A person who thinks about electrified fences, barbed-wire barricades and mine-fields does not really think about peace, but about the continuation of the war by other means."

What do boundaries and states matter, so long as there is "peace"? Ask the Al-Atrash family. One morning in March last year they were dragged from their home on the outskirts

ble. After the way she was manhandled by the troops Zuhur al-Atrash needed hospital treatment for a broken arm. Her husband Yussuf was arrested along with their teenage son and daughter, leaving the younger children on their own. The family had to move into a tent.

The destruction of civilian homes by a military occupier, unless it results directly from ongoing hostilities, is a crime under the 1949 Geneva Convention. It has happened to the al-Atrash family three times since they started trying to establish their home for themselves in 1988. The family owns and cultivates a bit of land, but each time they asked for a building permit, they were refused it, till they decided they had had enough, and would build themselves a place anyway. "I don't ask for something impossible," said Yussuf al-Atrash, who works in a shoe factory. "I ask only for a house to live in with my family". He looks over the seven acres of hillside he has planted with almonds, peaches and olives. "This is my land, the land of my father and my ancestors. . Why can't they let me and my family be?"

This is not war, you understand, nor "ethnic cleansing", but simply a

criminatory policy they apply within their state borders - Palestinian towns and villages are surrounded by settlements, Palestinian communities denied the space to grow, by such means as refusing building permits, and young Palestinians thus given a choice - overcrowding, ghetto conditions, or emigration. Or they can build without permits, defying the bulldozers of the State.

Hundreds of homes have been demolished since the US-backed "peace process" began. Since Labour took office, with supporters and partners demanding a change, and Israeli peace campaigners joining Palestinians to oppose the demolitions, these have slowed down. Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert, a member of the outgoing right-wing Likud, has said he'll hire private heavies to enforce evictions if the government won't provide forces. Interior minister and former Soviet "disident" Nathan Sharansky has been tackled over the related issue of Palestinians refused residence permits in Jerusalem, and has promised change. But the struggle is far from over, as this newspaper report shows:

"Home to three families

ing for communist infiltration," writes Nicholas Rufford, presumably tongue-in-cheek, "although there is no suggestion that Yung has tried to subvert the Alliance". Indeed not. Very droll. Though Yung lives in Hong Kong he owns an English estate and race-horses, and is so anglicised they call him "Larry Young" in racing circles.

"He controls a multi-billion-pound business empire in China, including stakes in the airline Cathay Pacific and Hong Kong Telecom, part of Cable & Wireless. . . his father is Rong Yiren, vice-president of China from 1993 to 1998 and former right-hand man to the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. Yung is a business associate of Deng's son-in-law, who runs China's biggest arms company. The Chinese magazine *Caifu*, which means wealth, named Yung the richest Chinese national in 1996. Forbes magazine rated him as China's wealthiest man and first dollar billionaire in 1997. Yung's wealth has soared since he increased his personal stake in Citic Pacific, his main investment vehicle". (*Hong Kong tycoon funds hunt lobby, Sunday Times, 17 October*)

The people protesting the threat to "our cherished British freedom" to hunt can thank the crushing of the democracy protestors in Tien Mien Square ten years ago. A nervous reaction on Hong Kong's stock market sent shares plummeting. By the time investors were convinced order reigned in Beijing, and regained confidence, Larry Yung's China International Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC) had grabbed a \$1.3 billion, 12 per cent holding in Hong Kong Telecom, becoming a major player in the colony's capitalism. The Chinese bureaucracy's "liberation" of Hong Kong elbows aside democratic aspirations, favouring rule by bankers and businessmen, just like in the old days of British

colonial rule. No wonder Rupert Murdoch approves (as apparently does Martin Jacques), and the Metropolitan Police, with a nod from Blair's government, gave demonstrators against President Jiang a Wapping.

But being one of the new *taipans* was not enough for "Larry Young". He had to become an English country gentleman. He bought former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's old estate, Birch Grove, in East Sussex, a 335-acre property with a golf course and shooting estate, for £5 million. The estate is tended by a staff of housekeepers, gardeners and gamekeepers for the few weeks a year when Yung stays there. Through Macmillan's grandson, Earl Stockton, he was introduced to the Countryside Alliance.

Others backing the Countryside Alliance, according to Rufford, include John Paul Getty, son of the American oil baron; Lord Faringdon, lord-in-waiting to the Queen and a partner in Cazenove, the merchant bank; Paul Van Vliessen, of one of Holland's richest families; Lord Inchyra, former director-general of the British Bankers' Association and a member of the Queen's bodyguard; Sir Adam Butler, son of the former Tory home secretary and former parliamentary private secretary to Margaret Thatcher; and Charles McVeigh, chairman of Salomon Smith Barney, the investment bank.

Should any of these red-necked rustics ever step out of their Rollers to join a Countryside march, who will be first to try and sign them up, the nasty entrists from the British National Party, or the pushy sales reps from *Living Marxism*, sorry, *LM* magazine? Surely neither, for Beijing's man has arrived to lead the poor peasantry of Park Lane in this new People's Army!

Muzhik

From Red Guards to Green Barbour

AS the Countryside Alliance stomps England's green unpleasant land denouncing townies who don't understand Ye-Old-Country-Ways, it can refute the stereotype of its own supporters as reactionary backwoodsmen prejudiced against the outside world. Being gentry, the huntin' and shootin' lobby doesn't boast about its money, or where it comes from. But the *Sunday Times* has revealed that Larry Yung, son of a former vice president of the Chinese People's Republic, has backed the Alliance to the tune of £650,000, and helped pay for its new headquarters.

"The involvement of a Chinese multimillionaire has raised eyebrows at MI5, whose role includes watch-

Unemployed Activists to Visit Britain

by Assaf Adiv

I will be visiting Britain together with my colleague Wehbe Badarneh from WAC (Workers Advice Center) in the middle of December 1999. Both of us are playing an important role in the growing fightback of workers and unemployed in Israel.

It is our idea to meet people and participate in the 10 December activities against unemployment. We feel it was extremely important for us to study how Blair treated the unemployed and how the Labour movement should respond to it.

We are ready to share with people in Britain our experience in the fight of the Arab unemployed. We are currently in the middle of a fight against

the Employment Bureau in Jewish Nazareth Eilit which discriminates against Arab unemployed from the nearby Arab Village of Ein Mahel.

For more information see <http://www.odaction.org/wac/>

If you think you might be interested in meeting WAC delegation or made our visit known to other people involved in the Unemployed fight or the left in general, or help organize a wider meetings we would be grateful.

Please write us ASAP so we can organize our schedule accordingly.

Assaf Adiv

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Attacks legitimised by government's attitude

Refugee family defence network set up!

FAMILIES of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK who have suffered racist attacks and murder have joined together to forge a common campaigning network.

A meeting at Camden Town Hall in central London on 27 October heard representatives of the family and friends of Farhan Mire, Liban Ali and other victims of racist attacks. The meeting was organised by the National Civil Rights Movement.

OPENING the meeting, Suresh Grover of The Monitoring Project explained that the purpose of the campaign was to give a voice to families who have suffered racial attack.

The families represented at the meeting had been identified as refugees and picked out for attack, he warned.

They had been left isolated without support even though they were the victims.

Farhan Mire was a young man who was attacked and killed just before Christmas last year. His head was turned ninety degrees by the violence of the racist beating.

Police worked with the family and a suspect was identified. However, just prior to committal proceedings the police told the family there was not enough evidence to prosecute.

Liban Ali was out with friends in Leicester on 15 June this year when he was set upon by four white youths. He received horrendous head injuries.

One of the perpetrators

returned to the scene and was recognised and this led to four arrests. However, despite the evidence of many witnesses police gradually dropped charges, until in the end only one young man faced a charge of attempted murder and a young woman faced public order charges.

The young man struck a deal with the prosecution service and was found guilty of the less serious charge of grievous bodily harm. He faces three years in jail.

Meanwhile Liban is still in a specialist hospital and has had two brain operations. He is unable to recognise members of his family and will need expert care for the rest of his life.

"Despite everything that has been said in and after the McPherson Inquiry, Liban Ali is in hospital can cannot recognise his own family, while three of his four attackers have gone free", Suresh added.

Suresh warned of a new dimension in these attacks: "It's not just racist attacks. In the last

six years refugees have been particularly targeted for attack. Figures of victims approaching The Monitoring Group and the National Civil Rights Movement are unprecedented. Since March, 150 refugee families have turned to us.

"These attacks are legitimised by the government's attitude on asylum seekers.

"The aim of the meeting is to build and unite a network of families to help and support each other".

Liban ali's 16-year-old sister Ibo Ali said that her brother had been left with severe brain damage:

"But my brother's life is not cheap".

Asha Yassin told the meeting that when her daughter was brutally attacked the police had arrested and charged her. "With the help of The Monitoring Group she was acquitted.

"Every day people suffer little things. Racial harassment severely damages the quality of life."

Farhan Mire's first cousin recollected that Farhan was always sociable and amiable. "He fled persecution abroad to live his life in the UK, not knowing that brutal murder was in store for him. My family is asking for justice in the name of all that is sacred".

Bali Gill, the solicitor representing the Mire and Ali families, said that the conduct of the investigations raised concerns over appalling behaviour by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

In the case of Liban ali, the police and CPS met without telling the family to asses the evi-

dence and from that meeting offered a deal to the assailant.

The judge in the case accepted the deal and said he was moved by a letter the accused had written to him expressing remorse. (This was a young man who not only

there was doubt about the character of the main witness and that laboratory analysis of the suspect's clothes had not produced any evidence.

Lawrence family solicitor Imran Khan quoted from the offi-



Ibo Ali telling the meeting about her brother Liban

deliberately and viciously battered the victim but came back to do it again.)

The same judge refused to accept that the attack was racist, separating the racist verbal abuse and the attack itself into two distinct episodes.

"Only a few months after publication of the McPherson report, the Ali family had absolutely no benefit from it".

In the case of the killing of Farhan Mire, which happened at the height of the press interest in the McPherson inquiry, police visited the family almost daily and confidently said they had enough evidence to charge a suspect with murder. They were also sure there was conclusive scientific evidence.

However, on 29 March this year the investigating officer suddenly informed the family that

cial bench-book on ethnic minority issues sent as guidance to all judges and commented:

"We have legislation, policies, recommendations: the problem is we have no implementation.

"Racism permeates the process. Despite the hopes of a 'post-McPherson paradise' we are seeing a rise of racism and a reluctance by the authorities to operate their policies.

"Those at the fore-front of the attacks are the refugees and asylum-seekers who are escaping the depredations of international capital".

Imran Khan traced the process by which racist criteria had been introduced into immigration law by successive governments and correlated it with the growth in racist attacks.

"If we are going to tackle racism, if the McPherson inquiry

is to mean anything, we have to tackle racism in employment and in immigration law.

"We have to create massive support for these families".

Faduma Habad, the mother of Mohamed Farah, told the meeting her son had been killed on 26 September 1998.

"I live in Canada. When I heard the shocking news I travelled to London.

"Two weeks later I asked the police a number of questions. Have you interviewed witnesses? — 'no'; have you used television to ask for information? — 'no'; Have you taken statements from my son's friends? — 'no'; have you visited my son's apartment? — 'no'.

"The police-family liaison officer told me my son was shot and died instantly.

"I asked to meet the doctor who had examined my son. The police refused to let me. I contacted the Somali High Commission who got in touch with the hospital directly.

"The doctor informed me that my son was alive with a weak pulse through loss of blood when he arrived.

"A year later my son's killer is still free".

Others in the audience of about 80 came forward with reports of racist attacks and police bias.

Readers and supporters of Workers International Press should do everything they can to assist and encourage these and other refugee families to organise, speak out and defend themselves.

This is an issue for the whole labour movement.

No justice for asylum seekers!



SEVERAL hundred protestors joined a vigil against the Asylum Bill outside the Prime-Minister's residence in Downing Street last month.

A vigil and hunger-strike had been maintained for the previous week.

Under new UK legislation, asylum-seekers who actually make it to Britain in the teeth of draconian controls will be confined in detention centres while their applications for asylum are being heard.

Amidst widespread media propaganda about "bogus" asylum seekers and attempts

to criminalise refugees, new and much more peremptory procedures for "determining" cases will lead to many more expulsions.

Meanwhile welfare provision for successful applicants for refugee status will be cut to the bone. Refugees will be directed to live in particular parts of the country.

Many refugee organisations and the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns joined the demonstration, which was organised by the National Assembly Against Racism.

From the National Co-alition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

THE UK government plans to issue immediate deportation orders on anyone who arrives in the UK and asks for "asylum".

The Immigration and Asylum Bill has now almost completed its stages through the House of Lords and the Government intend that it should receive royal assent this month.

Government ministers showed their arrogance and ruthless determination by tabling last minute amendments to the Bill to allow deportation orders to be issued before an asylum claim is determined.

The amendments will allow the Home Office to issue retrospective deportation orders on asylum seekers who made claims from July 1993 but have not yet had their cases heard.

129 unelected Lords voted to continue New Labour's persecution of Asylum Seekers.

John Stewart, for the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, said: "The Home Office seem determined to deport people as fast as they can. This latest amendment indicates they are prepared

to trample all over the tradition of "natural justice" in their determination to kick people out of the UK."

Attorney General Lord Williams of Mostyn said the change was designed to speed up the asylum process.

Lord Williams said the idea was to reduce bureaucracy and make it more difficult for bogus asylum seekers to try to evade a rejection of their application.

Liberal Democrat Baroness Williams of Crosby warned that the government had not explained properly how its proposals would not prejudice the claims of genuine asylum

seekers.

The government was "making an assumption that somebody may be removed when his case or her case has not even been heard", she said.

Crossbencher and former Liberal Democrat MP Lord Alton of Liverpool protested the move was against "natural justice".

Lord Williams said he understood Liberal Democrat concerns but refused to amend the proposals.

"We will of course in every case consider whether the subject is a refugee. If the subject is a refugee, we will not be setting removal directions," he stressed.

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Web site:
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Stop Oakington camp!

ON 21 October 1999, Barbara Roche Minister for Immigration and Nationality announced plans for another detention centre.

The Home Office have applied for planning permission to convert Oakington army barracks near Cambridge into a detention centre for asylum seekers

The centre would, when fully operational, be able to accommodate up to 400 asylum seekers, who arrive at ports in the South East and at Stanstead Airport.

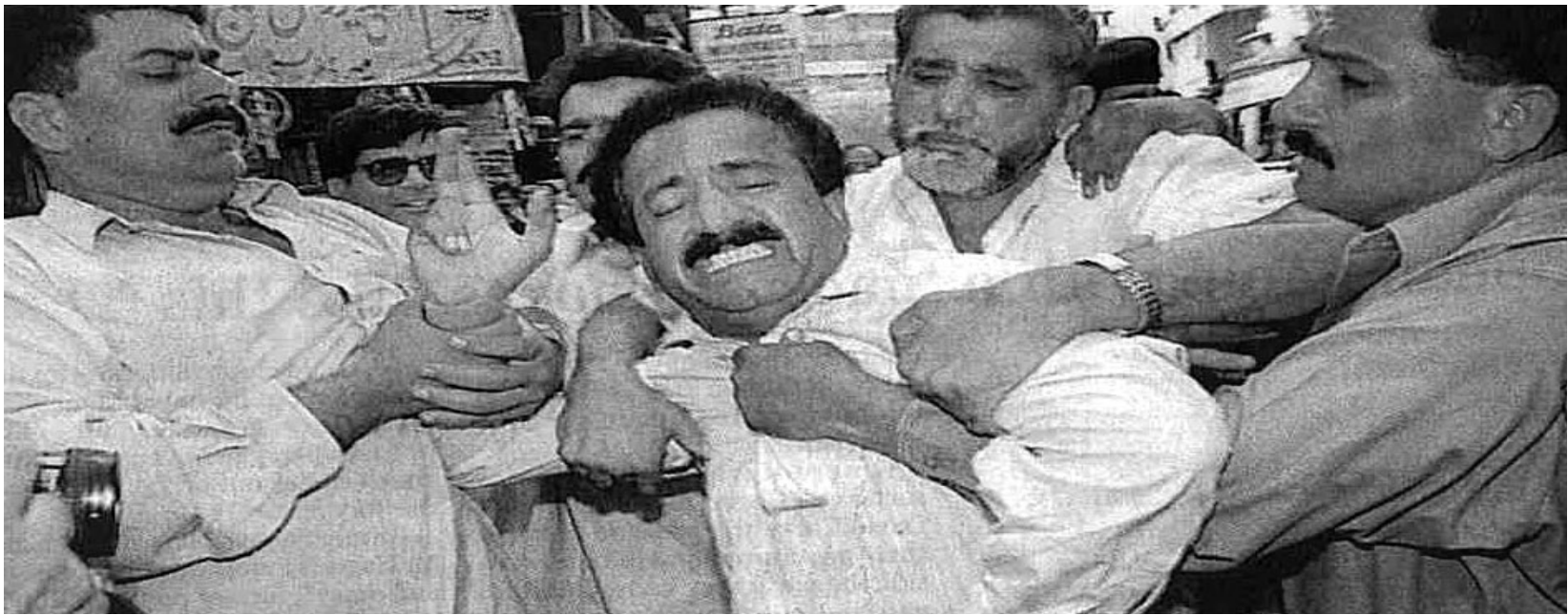
Applicants will be required to reside at Oakington under existing Immigration Powers for initial examination of their claim.

A planning application is being sub-

mitted for the site, a former military barracks, to South Cambridgeshire District Council.

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns are asking people to write or fax South Cambridgeshire District Council and persuade them to refuse planning permission for the detention centre.

The left and military dictatorship in Pakistan



The military regime’s police arrest an opponent in Pakistan

The articles reproduced here are based on emails from the Pakistan Labour Party. As you will see, there is a need for those who are opposed to the methods of the military in Pakistan to protest against the coup and specifically against the raid on the offices of the Pakistan Labour Party offices.

By Farooq Sulehria

A week after the dictatorship of Pervaiz Mussaraf took over in Pakistan, it seems most of the political parties have rendered their support to the military coup. Unfortunately, the Left parties are also among those who have welcomed the take over.

On 18th October, the Pakistan National Conference (PNC) an alliance of 7 Left and radical bourgeois parties welcomed the military dictatorship and demanded a strict accountability of the outgoing Muslim League leadership.

The decision, reported by Daily Dawn, was taken in its Central Committee meeting held in Lahore on 18th October.

Such was the corruption of the Muslim League leaders during the past 30 months that most of the political parties have gone along with the popular sentiments in favour of the military dictatorship. The change of government has generally been welcomed by the masses. It was more out of a feeling of relief than out of support for the military.

The Left parties that have supported the military dictatorship include the National Workers Party (NWP) established on 2nd June 1999 after three Left parties, the Pakistan Socialist Party, Awami Jamhuri Party and the Pakistan National party decided to merge in one single party.

Apart from the NWP, the Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party has also taken the same stand. These Stalinist Parties have tried to find alternatives to the most extremely corrupt bourgeoisie parties within the framework of the capitalist system. So they have come to the conclusion that the military must do some good jobs for them before the masses are ready for democracy.

They have believed the nice and charming words of the military dictator General Pervaiz Mussaraf that he is there to clean up the mess, that his main aim is to develop the economy and to have real accountability of the civilian politicians who have looted the state assets and have not returned loans.

He says that this process will start from 1985, so there will be no mention

of the looting and plunder on the part of the Zia dictatorship from 1977 to 1985.

The military dictatorship have given four weeks to those defaulters of the banks to return the loan, otherwise an iron hand will come into action. This is an initial popular clever move by the new dictator to win the sympathies of the masses.

The real agenda of the military is to complete the unfinished agenda of the IMF and World Bank. That is rapid privatisation, reintroduction of the General Sales Tax, devaluation, raising fuel prices and reducing trade tariffs.

Those who gave support to the military dictatorship also include the Pakistan Peoples Party, the party of Benazir Bhutto. She said in one interview that she is willing to give six months to the military dictatorship to create accountability. She also offered other good advice to the General.

The present military dictatorship, unlike the previous dictator Zia, has not used Islam as one of its main political weapons.

It has tried to show a liberal face. So this has been also one reason for the Left parties to give it initial support. As a matter of fact, the present military dictatorship has not used the name martial law.

General Pervaiz Mussaraf does not call himself Martial Law administrator but Chief Executive. This is to hide his real face and to please the Imperialists.

Unlike other Left parties, the Pakistan Labour Party (LPP) have taken a firm position to oppose the military dictatorship and to call for a workers’ and peasants’ commission to investigate the corruption of the civil and military politicians and bureaucracy. It has demanded an interim government of workers and peasants to hold impartial general elections for a new constitutional assembly.

The LPP has not only made these demands in words, but it has helped to organise the first public meeting in Karachi to oppose the dictatorship. On 17th October, a meeting was organised at the prestigious

Karachi Press Club to pay tribute to a revolutionary workers’ poet. The LPP was one the organisers of the event.

Speaking on the occasion, LPP national General Secretary Farooq

Tariq was the only speaker from a range of nationally-known intellectuals and poets who openly criticised the military dictatorship. He explained that what has failed is not democracy but capitalist democracy.

The alternative is not a military dictatorship but to build a workers movement. He openly declared that the LPP will fight the dictatorship and will build a broad campaign for the restoration of democracy.

The 300 Left activists present very warmly welcomed Farooq Tariq on the occasion. It has set the tone of the movement in the largest city of Pakistan. The speech was given such a warm welcome that many have contacted the party to join.

This also exposed the so-called welcome feelings for the military dictatorship. It was matter of explanation that has helped the activists to make up their minds for the future fight.

Addressing a press conference next day in the Karachi LPP office, Farooq Tariq said there should be no support for the military dictatorship’s invitation for nominations for a national Security Council. An emergency meeting of Karachi LPP comrades discussed the situation and a possible fight back by the party.

In Lahore, the first edition of Weekly Mazdoor Jeddohd (Workers Struggle) printed a headline saying “No to military dictatorship”. The paper appealed to the workers and peasants to prepare for a struggle for the restoration of democracy.

Military raids weekly Mazdoor Jeddohd offices in Lahore

Report Farooq Sulehria

The army raided the offices of Weekly Mazdoor Jeddohd on 21st October. A truck load of military men came to the office at 5.30pm and entered the premises of the Pakistan Trade Unions Resource centre.

They asked the print workers whether the weekly paper was printed here. They asked about the owner of the paper and seized some copies of the paper.

They also took a copy of a new book, “Prepare For A Fight”, written by LPP overseas organiser Amjad Ayub.

Meanwhile LPP chairman Shoaib Bhatti approached the commander of the military team and asked why they had come. The officer in charge asked who was the editor and Comrade Shoaib replied that he was the editor. When asked why he was writing this against the military. Comrade Shoaib told him that it was our point of view. On this, he left with his team without taking any action.

The LPP general Secretary Farooq Tariq and Chairman Shoaib Bhatti have issued a joint press statement

denouncing this harassment as an attack on the freedom of the press.

They said it was a violation of the promise made by the Chief Executive General Pervaiz Mussaraf in his first address that freedom of press would be respected.

They said that it was their democratic right to oppose the military regime and demanded an end of these raids.

The first issue of the Weekly Mazdoor Jeddohd was printed on 19th October with the headline “No to Martial Law” and an appeal to the working masses to fight against the military dictatorship. It has detailed articles on the present situation and LPP’s point of view about fighting back against the military take over.

LPP is the only political party which has not welcomed the present military take over.

Please protest against this attack and send your Emails and faxes to:

Chief Executive General Pervaiz Mussaraf
Islamabad,
Pakistan.

Your letters and articles are welcome. Please contact the editor:

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