

# Anger over site deaths SIX KILLED IN THREE DAYS

**BUILDING** workers expressed their anger at yet another tragedy with the Ashford building collapse.

On 1 August, four of our comrades were crushed to death under a three-storey building that collapsed on them apparently without warning.

But there was a warning. Workers had complained about safety just one day before the accident at a site meeting.

On 31 July, another man was killed in Weighbridge, Surrey, when he fell 20 feet to his death while working on a roof.

In Islington, 2 August, a sixth man died when he fell from his ladder. It was reported that there was no 'footing' on the ladder to stop it slipping at the bottom.

So in just three days six construction workers had died because of the conditions under which we are forced to work. How much longer will we have to accept these barbaric conditions?

## Conditions

These conditions are the reason why the Construction Safety Campaign was set up. Not just to fight for justice but for the prevention of deaths and accidents in our work-

places. Most deaths and accidents on sites happen for a reason: 90 per cent of employers have been found liable for accidents on building sites. Profit is put before safety. Short cuts are taken on safety measures.

**BY FRANK EARLY**  
Building worker

Over the last two decades and longer, the government has been constantly battling to destroy our unions and has achieved many of its goals.

## Prosecutions

All employers found liable must be prosecuted. But, even though these prosecutions are necessary they will not end all deaths on our sites.

Building-site workers are not alone in their struggle, as an anti-working-class policy has been carried out by all governments up to now. But we have not been beaten yet!

■ **The Construction Safety Campaign can be contacted on 0171-537 7220.**

## MPs' inflation rage

MPs are angry! Not about the inhuman treatment suffered by women raped and children made homeless in Bosnia or the men rounded-up and 'disappeared' on the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa.

MPs are angry that since their pay has been linked to that of middle-ranking civil servants to avoid any more embarrassing self-awarded pay increases they're likely to

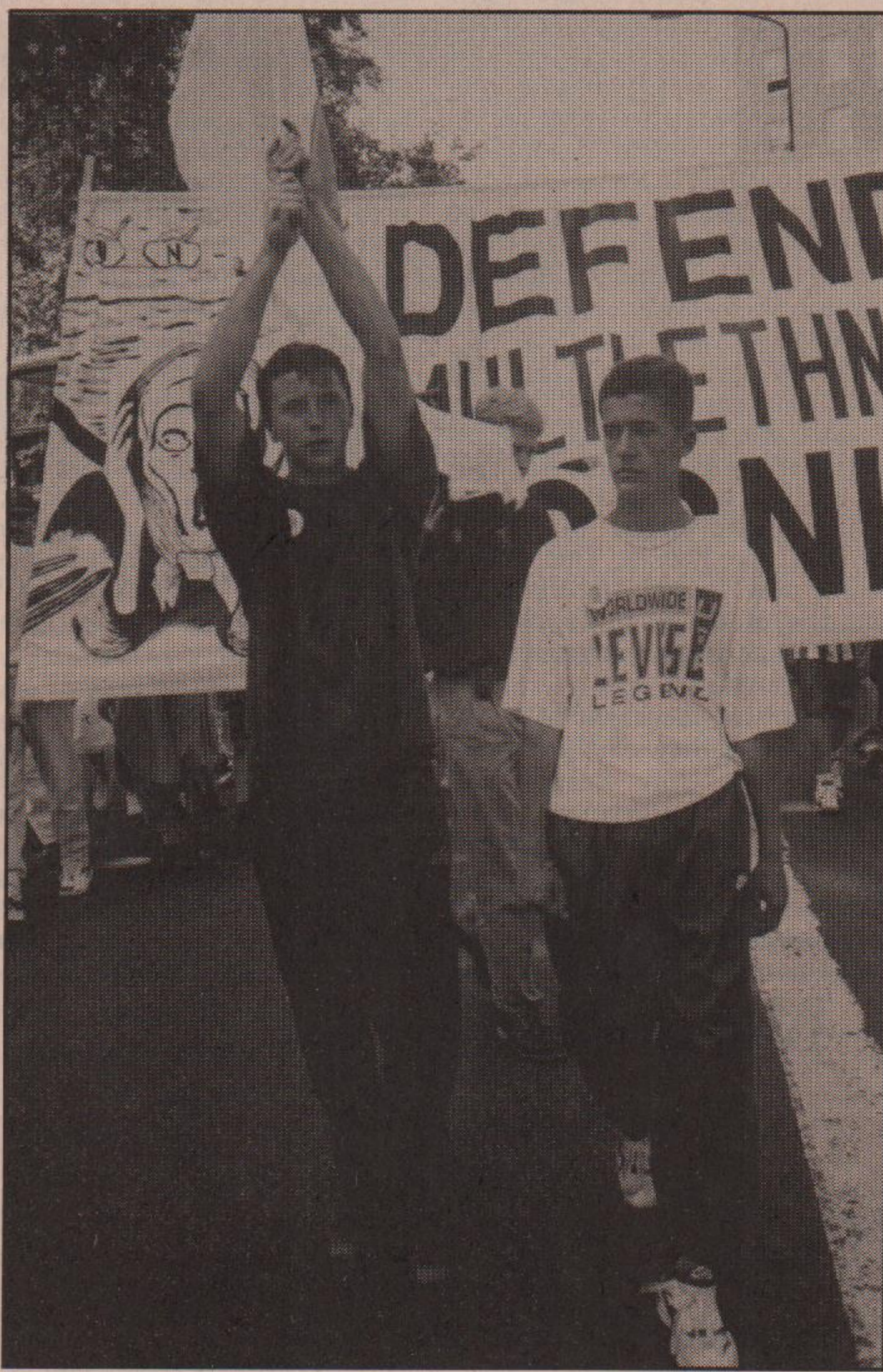
get only 2.7 per cent — less than the rate of inflation.

To them it only goes to show how much they need those extra 'payments' from lobbyists that they're worried will be denied them if the recommendations of the Nolan report on government sleaze are carried out!

It's a pity they don't live on a different planet — preferably one without air!

## Bobby Owens

TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION Region No.6 Secretary Bobby Owens died suddenly on 7 August in his late 40s. He was previously shop steward at Standard Motors (British Leyland) in Liverpool. Before becoming regional secretary Owens was the co-ordinator of the Liverpool Trade Union and Unemployed Resource Centre.



'Defend multi-ethnic Bosnia!' Last Saturday's march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square. See page 3 for a speech from the rally

## Bradford demonstration on Bosnia

In response to the fall of the so-called U.N. Safe areas a group has been formed in Bradford of trades unionists, socialists and community activists who have called for a march and demonstration in Bradford on Saturday 26 August.

The organising leaflet says:

'We are alarmed and dismayed at the massacre and rape of the people of Bosnia. Just as the Nazis carried out a policy of genocide against the Jews the Serbian regime is carrying out a holocaust against the Bosnian people. We believe that the Bosnian people should have the right to arm and defend themselves and are calling for the arms embargo to be lifted. The UN should stop the massacre or get out of Bosnia now.'

One of the march organisers Geoff Robinson of Bradford Trades Council Executive said: 'We have held successful activities in Bradford throughout the Bosnian situation but the fall of Srebrenica really brought home the complicity of the UN and the British government. We hope to use the demonstration to build for the September Workers Aid convoy. One of the things we find appalling is that people on the left who should be opposing genocide and ethnic cleansing are remaining silent. The demonstration will give people a chance to show where they stand.'

It starts from the Infirmary Fields, Bradford at 1pm. The Bradford Bosnia Solidarity Campaign can be contacted c/o the Grosvenor Community Centre, Laburnum Street, Bradford, 01274 725046.

## Convoy arrives, Tuzla, Friday 4 August, 8am

**BY BOB MYERS**

EIGHTY people and 15 trucks made it to Tuzla on the July trade union convoy.

Trucks came from Spain (1), France (2), Britain (11) and Ireland (1)

Union representatives came from the Communication Workers' Union, French postal workers, local government workers, teachers' and university lecturers' unions and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils.

The journey took 10 days: three days to cross 50 km of Croat-controlled areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina!

Unloading of aid has started — 70 tonnes of food, hospital supplies, school and university supplies, and miners equipment.

Meetings have been scheduled with Tuzla unions and Bosnia trade union federation leaders.

Members of the convoy team went to the British ambassador's press conference in Tuzla and joined with Tuzla reporters in criticizing the British

government's refusal to lift the arms embargo.

Why so long (three days) to cross a mere 50km (about 30 miles) of Bosnia held by Croat nationalists? Hundreds of lorries at the border were waiting for HVO (the Bosnian Croat-nationalist forces) customs. Only ten lorries a day were checked. We had to spend a day and a half harassing HVO customs to inspect our 15 lorries on the road rather than in the compound which only takes four lorries at a time.

Then two more customs inspections while crossing HVO territory.

The officials appear to be bureaucrats of the old regime freed from any logic at all. But, there is a real reason for the delays: to put pressure on Bosnia to accept that this region is autonomous or part of Croatia.

The final customs check took three hours because the customs man could not find a pen and would not use ours.

Everyone on the convoy now understands why the division of Bosnia is unacceptable and why the northern route must be opened.

## Bosnia Solidarity Campaign BOSNIA FORUM

Central Hall, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH, Saturday 9 September, 10.30am-5.30pm

For information: Tel/Fax 0171-240 7992.

Trafalgar Square is booked for 24 September for another Bosnia demonstration. Get in touch for further details!



# Workers Press

## Bosnia is part of anti-racist fight

FOR the past three years, every racist psycho and Nazi skinhead in Europe has been parroting a new phrase — 'ethnic cleansing'. Encouraged by the slaughter of innocents in former Yugoslavia, some even went to join the Croat Ustashi, or the Serb nationalist Chetniks, and get 'blooded'.

Britain's Nazi C18 gang, suspected by some of links with the state, supports the Serb fascists. So does Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Mass murder, torture, raping kids — that's just up their street. But are 'respectable' racists in the government and media, who say a multi-cultural society can't work, any better?

In 1992, rather than submit to a bullying Serb regime that had already used troops against their neighbours, Bosnians voted overwhelmingly for 'a sovereign and independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state of equal citizens and nations of Muslims, Serbs, Croats and others who live in it'.

\* \* \* \* \*

SERBIA sent tanks and planes to crush them, and armed right-wing racist gangs to start 'ethnic cleansing'. Britain's Lord Owen proposed a partition plan — just what the 'ethnic cleansers' wanted — Apartheid in Europe. As one Bosnian commented:

'They want to divide us. What am I supposed to do, divorce my wife, split up the kids? My wife's a Serb, I'm a Muslim. I've not been in the mosque since I was a kid, but now they put a label on you.'

Whenever the BBC talks about Bosnians it says 'Muslims'. One man interviewed on 'Newsnight' tried three times to explain that although a Bosnian citizen and spokesperson, he was not a 'Muslim' as they kept saying. They didn't want to know. It's the old colonial 'master' asking 'what tribe' you belong to! (The BBC usually prefers interviewing Serb nationalists anyway, as Radio 4 did the morning after their shelling killed 72 kids in Tuzla.)

When it suits the imperialists to support a reactionary Muslim regime, as in Sudan, they'll do so. But Bosnia's Muslims aren't fighting to dominate anyone else, they're just fighting to live. And many other Bosnians who are not Muslims remain with them in the fight for freedom. This isn't a war of Muslim against Christian, but a defence of civilised, democratic rights against fascist barbarism.

\* \* \* \* \*

TORY politicians like Portillo, Hurd and Rifkind say Bosnians are 'all killing each other'. The media talk about Radovan Karadzic representing 'the Bosnian Serbs', just as they say Chief Buthulezi represents 'the Zulu'. If you're a COSATU member in KwaZulu, or a Serb trade unionist defending multi-cultural Tuzla, you're a nuisance! If you talk about your people being united, they'll try to shut you up.

Wherever British imperialism has been threatened its answer has been 'divide and rule', partition — in Ireland, India, Palestine. The Tories keep an arms embargo on Bosnia, having connived at Serbia and its generals getting all the arms they need. But they don't just want to impose partition on Bosnia. They want everyone to accept that racist divisions and 'ethnic cleansing' are 'natural', and normal.

The people who want to carve up Bosnia are the same Tories who stand for racist immigration laws, deportations and state brutality here. The Bosnian people are in the frontline against fascism. The racists and Nazis have had no trouble recognising what side they're on. Nor must we.

- OPPOSE racist 'ethnic cleansing', rape and murder
- SUPPORT the Bosnian people's right to remain a multi-cultural society
- DENOUNCE Tory hypocrisy and the treacherous imperialist UN. Lift the arms embargo! Demand that Nelson Mandela's South African government supply arms to those fighting Apartheid in Europe!
- JOIN the non-stop picket in Whitehall opposite Downing Street!

# Letters

## Self determination

DAVE TEMPLE states in his open letter to the Socialist Workers' Party ('Taking Sides on Bosnia', 15 July) that working-class internationalists should support 'the long-established principle' of 'the right of self-determination of a country against a foreign aggressor regardless of the outlook of the politicians who happen at any one moment to head that national struggle'.

Did he therefore support the right of self-determination of the Cambodian people when their country was occupied by Vietnam in 1978? Did he support the right of self-determination of the Kuwaiti people when their country was occupied by Iraq in 1990?

If he were consistent with the principle he lays out in the letter, he would be forced to answer in the affirmative.

Temple is right to point out that the effect of the United Nations policy of military and political intervention in the former Yugoslavia has been to promote ethnic division and war. Yet he is silent on the Bosnian government's collusion with this policy.

This government invited the UN to intervene in the country. It has agreed to its plans for ethnic partition. It welcomes the military and political support of the barbaric clerical regime in Tehran. It is privatising the mines and factories. Whether its leadership is Muslim nationalist or multi-ethnic in social composition, it represents the interests of a section of the Stalinised pro-market bureaucracy of the former Yugoslavian regime, not the working class.

Temple is right to stress that the workers of the former Yugoslavia have no interest in nationalism and ethnic war. Yet he is silent on the history of the anti-war movement in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. This movement, now forced underground, has the potential to topple the war-mongering governments the UN supports.

Temple is also right to single out the inability of the left in Britain, the USA, Europe and elsewhere to organise mass protests and demonstrations against rape, concentration camps, and fascist support for the

Serbian government's war efforts. He forgets to mention, however, Islamic fundamentalist support for the Bosnian government's war efforts. He suggests that this is unreal — a 'smoke-screen' of no importance.

Most of the left held illusions that UN intervention would bring an end to war rather than intensify and promote it. Many of the left, including Temple, support the idea that workers must take sides with one or another of the governments of former Yugoslavia.

The left seems to have forgotten the 'long-established principle' of socialists to oppose wars led by imperialists and nationalists. This means opposing both the UN's military actions in Bosnia and the war efforts of the nationalist regimes.

Workers in Tuzla and Sarajevo have a right to defend themselves against fascist aggression. However, without coordinated anti-war workers' uprisings in Serbia and Croatia, and without taking control of the cities, the food supplies and the weaponry away from the Bosnian government and the UN, their struggle is doomed to the deep demoralisation caused by prolonged war. It is then that resistance to ethnic division could weaken.

The ruling class has not forgotten the experience of the Paris Commune. From the start of this war, it has acted in Bosnia to prevent the democratic mobilisation of the urban population by military control over food supplies. This has been motivated not from any humanitarian impulse but to stabilise the Bosnian government and appease the Serbian regime.

Workers Aid for Bosnia is to be congratulated for providing an active focus for discussion on the left of political events in the former Yugoslavia. Whether it will be successful in helping workers in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia to oppose the war and defend the unity of a multi-ethnic working class remains to be seen.

Paul B. Smith  
Govan

## German plot

WHEN I tackled Dennis Skinner on his links with the Committee for Peace in the Balkans (on Serbia's terms), he assured me that he doesn't join committees and that he has not met Sir Alfred

Sherman. So I wrote back. Great, I said. Carry on not meeting him and tell Tony Benn never to meet him again — Sherman is bad news.

Skinner was quoted in the 'Guardian' as complaining about ethnic cleansing of the miners in this country. He should be sharply informed of the Trepca miners.

When the then Yugoslavia president, Slobodan Milosevic, who is now the Serbian leader, abolished home rule for Kosovo in 1989, the lead and zinc miners of Trepca declared a hunger strike and occupied the pits for nine days. They said they wouldn't leave until home rule for Kosovo was restored. They were tricked into coming up by the president of the Yugoslavian League of Communists, who falsely told them that home rule would be restored. When they came up again, they found that the country they lived in was under military occupation and they were forced to work under military law.

So when Skinner tells you that it's all a German plot, just tell him: remember the miners of Trepca. They used to mine lead in Derbyshire as well.

Tom Carter  
Somerton

## Fighting for the mentally ill

I AM glad that Ken Singer has reopened the discussion about mental illness, because there are still a number of points to be raised.

Someone once said to me 'the ultimate sin is ignorance'. Certainly ignorance is the worst enemy of the mentally ill.

Instances of cruelty may occur in mental hospitals as in other institutions. I personally consider ECT (Electro-Convulsion Therapy) to be an assault on the person — I refused to have it.

This is a treatment for severe depression. Lobotomy (a kind of brain surgery) for violently disturbed patients was open to the same objections and has been superseded by drug treatments.

Common mental disorders, such as phobias, obsessions, reactive depression, persecution complex, usually yield to milder treatment such as psychotherapy,

anti-depressants or even a change of environment.

(Would anyone living in a damp cellar, at the top of a high building where the lifts break down, stuck in a bed and break fast with a young child, a career looking after an aged relative day-in and day-out, an old woman uprooted from a foreign land, be expected to remain mentally 'normal'?)

Psychoses such as schizophrenia are different in that there is no definitive cure. Capitalism which really resents the Welfare State, regards schizophrenics like other mental patients, because they cannot do paid work, as layabouts 'living off the state'. Yet many schizophrenics are intelligent people doing useful voluntary work, while keeping in contact with their GP. Placing an extra burden on the social services in the 'community care' programme without giving extra funds is inexcusable. These services are already overstretched and consistently underfunded.

Unfortunately some people who should know better cannot distinguish people with mental illness from those with impaired mental capacity (i.e., with learning difficulties). Consequently when the council proposes to open a house or hospital for such people in a residential area, the neighbours get up a protest on the grounds that their children will be terrified or their properties devalued.

I have said nothing about the effect of diet on mental states. It is known that some food additives (the infamous E-numbers) produce hyperactivity in children. These ingredients are usually listed in small print. I cannot help thinking that a small helping of fresh green fruit salad would do more to improve morale and lift the spirits than a large dollop of pink peril with mock cream that ends up in the waste pail.

Ignorance is the greatest peril. And in the struggle for socialism, ignorance is just one of the stumbling blocks to be overcome. The combined forces of the capitalist press, the Tory government, international finance, and the advertising industry are against us.

The fight for the rights of minorities goes on.

C.M. Leach  
Hersham

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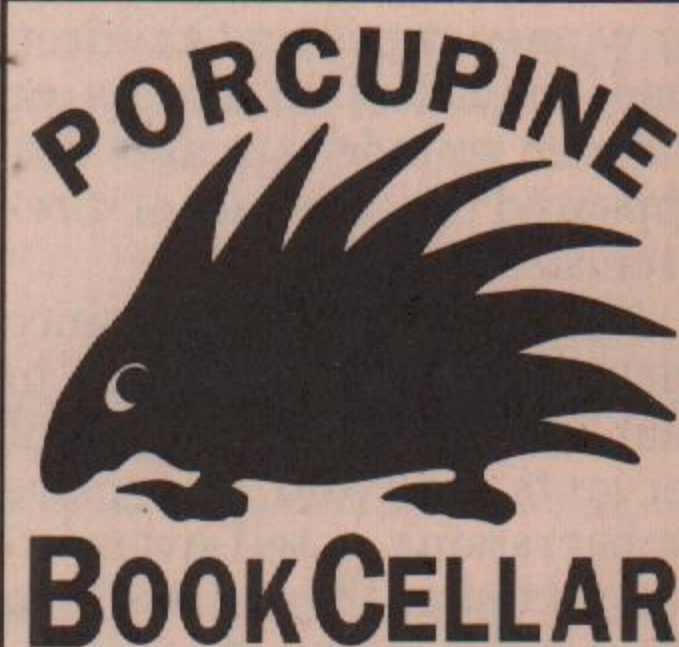
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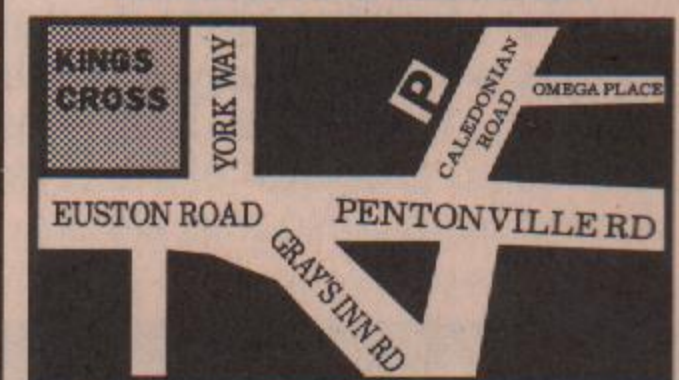
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# Answers to questions on the Bosnia picket

Last Saturday's Bosnia demonstration in central London ended with a rally at Trafalgar Square. Many people spoke from the plinth but all agreed that the most important contribution that said almost everything that could be said came from a Bosnian woman, Lejla Balbanovic.

Lejla has been one of the main participants in the non-stop picket being held outside Downing Street in Whitehall to demand the lifting of the arms embargo.

We print here the full text of the speech Lejla made from Trafalgar Square

I AM here as an elected representative of the picket. I would like to talk to you about our picket, about the issues we deal with and our supporters.

Firstly, some passersby accuse of us of not trusting the United Nations and of being in favour of war because we want to raise the embargo against the Bosnian people.

Answer: 'All my life I have been a dedicated pacifist, with all my strength against militarism, against weapons and against the use of force. And most of the Bosnian people are the same.

'And that is why we have no weapons now.

'To use plain words: What can you do if you are assaulted on your street by an aggressor using force?

'You can wait to be rescued.

'You can defend yourself.

'Or you can wait for the attacker to finish his work.

'We, the people of Bosnia, devastated and confused by sudden fascist aggression waited for a long time for someone to rescue us. We trusted the promises of the United Nations and the European Union.

'Under UN protection, fascist Serbs are killing us systematically day by day.

'Under UN protection, concentration camps are held.

'Under UN protection, a new holocaust is gathering strength in Europe.'

Other passersby ask: 'Why don't you negotiate?'

Well, Chamberlain tried to negotiate with Hitler. Words were not enough. Military force was needed to stop him, and all others who share his ideology of purity of Greater Germany as well as of Greater Serbia. An ideology that understands only force, that trains its followers to rape, to kill and to displace. As with Hitler, that can be stopped only by force, unfortunately.

## Supporters

Now: About our supporters. I am proud to tell you that we are not only Bosnians. Standing with us on the picket line are English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish people.

There are also people from many other countries.

We have gathered thousands of signatures of support. I am proud to say that they come from people from all over the world, all political backgrounds, all religions and races.

I am proud to see you, the people here at this demonstration. Jews together with Muslims and Christians here. I am proud because that is what we used to have in Bosnia and still have in the parts of our country that we still hold.

## Respect

Where we live together in harmony and respect, regardless of our religion and different backgrounds. We live in democracy with our neighbours from all nationalities.

We are not only Muslims, like the UN often defines us. We are Bosnians all together.

There are a vast number of Serbs living in Bosnian-held territories, sharing the same life and the same fate under aggression. They are Serbs also shot by Serb snipers. Serbs committed to democracy, shot by Serbs following fascist ideology.

There is an official body, the Serbs Civic Forum. Democratically, Serbs are present in the Bosnian government. One of the commanders of the Bosnian army is a Serb.

So don't believe in the UN excuse for not acting. This is not a religious war. This is fascism against democracy.

Last question; why are we standing day and night and why in front of John Major's cabinet and residence?

Symbolically, to show John Major and his colleagues that we are being killed in the late night hours as well as in the working hours. Our killers do not rest over the weekend, nor over holidays.

We can't see Mr Major — he looks down on us in the same way as a sniper looks down on the people of Sarajevo.

Even though you are not the sniper, Mr Major, you are still killing us, because you do nothing.

We can't see you, but you can see us. If you were interested in us, in any of us, Bosnians on the picket, you would hear our individual, tragic stories. Stories in which you have an important role.

If I had the opportunity to speak to you, I would tell you of my hopes, that I had hoped that you, after the experience with Serb fascism in Slovenia and Croatia, that you would prevent the occupation of my own neighbourhood by the fascist army.

But you did nothing. After I awoke one morning



At the rally in Trafalgar Square for Bosnia last Saturday, Michael Foot, former MP and campaigner for the defence of Bosnia, led a minute's silence in memory of those who died from the atom bomb that was dropped on innocent Japanese people in Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 and for also for innocent people who have been killed in the war in Bosnia

surrounded by armed fascists, who forbade us to leave our own home I had still hope that you and your colleagues would free us from our home prison.

But you did nothing.

After my husband was dragged out of our home and massacred, together with his mother and his brother, I had still hope that you would prevent this happening to other families.

But you did nothing.

After I passed through torture I had still hope that you would prevent this happening to other women.

But you did nothing.

After I was rescued by my Serbian friend who risked his own life to help me, I had still hope that you would remove the need for democratic Serbs to risk their lives by helping others.

But you did nothing.

After the fascists expelled me from my house and I was forced into exile, even then, I had still hope that you would prevent other people from becoming refugees.

But you did nothing.

After my best friend in Sarajevo was shot by a sniper, I still had hope that you would prevent other friends from being killed.

But you did nothing.

Although you knew everything, you did nothing.

I had believed for three and a half years in all the powerful world organisations, and in you. My belief was strong and it took a long time for my hope in you to die.

Now, after the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa, after tens of thousands of men had been slaughtered, thousands of women have been brutally raped, entire populations have been expelled from their homelands.

After all of this has happened under your and the UN's protection, I have no belief and I have no hope in you any more. I don't believe in your empty words of support. I don't believe in your endless conferences while we are dying and in your futile and stage-managed air strikes.

Even though not in you, I still have hope.

I have hope in our supporters throughout the world. I would like you to see all of the people in front of me and to know that we, together, recognise your empty promises.

## Pretend

John Major, you cannot pretend any more. We know you're not willing to help the Bosnian people. Probably because we don't have any oil.

But never mind, Mr Major, I

haven't lost my hope in our supporters and in our heroic men and women who are willing to fight to halt fascism the name of humanity.

We demand the basic human right to defend ourselves. Make it a little bit fair, if it can ever be fair. Provide us with the weapons so that we have more than our bodies to use against tanks and heavy artillery.

Remember, that if we are to be killed, we would prefer to die with dignity defending ourselves, than to die slowly, in miserable conditions under your so-called 'protection'.

But enough of Death; we are alive.

We have our brave hearts and our supporters, on the picket and here, in this meeting, and throughout the world.

So we will succeed.

We have to, in order to preserve the human ideals of justice and freedom.

We don't need support from the UN any more. We need support from you, the people at this meeting.

I know you people at this meeting will pray for us.

I know that the Catholics amongst you, will put the candle in the church for my mother-in-law, and all Catholics killed by the fascists.

I know that the Muslims

amongst you will pray *El Fatiha* for my uncle and for all other Muslims killed by fascists.

I know that the Jews amongst you will pray *Kadish* for my friend and for all Jews killed by fascists.

## Killed

I know that the Orthodox amongst you will pray for my Serb neighbour killed in the Serb-held territory because he refused to be a fascist, and for all democratic Serbs killed by fascist snipers and mortars.

I know, all of you would pray in your own way for my husband and his brother because they respected all religions but were not religious.

Pray. But praying is not enough. We need to be free. We don't need charity. Charity is not enough. It only serves to prolong our suffering. We need to defend ourselves. Once we can defend ourselves, we can feed ourselves.

So help us to be free. Come and join us on our picket, write to your MP, gain signatures for the petition, raise money for the convoys and explain to people around you about our struggle.

Force the decision makers to lift the embargo and allow us to defend ourselves.

We all can do a lot. Act, and act quickly, before it's too late.

# Jobless plan October campaign

BY KEN SINGER

**ACTION** by self-help groups to highlight the discriminatory nature of the Job Seekers Allowance was discussed at the 'Groundswell 2' conference in Oxford on 29 July.

October will see the start of the campaign and members are aiming for a high media profile.

Some are concerned that deci-

sions about the type of actions to take are being left to regional organisations. They want the next national meeting in Bradford to set up a centralised operation for this movement to achieve unity of purpose to co-ordinate the various groups' activities.

Among the 30 participants were representatives of the 'Exeter Claimants' Group', the 'Newham Claimants' Group' the 'Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh' and a number of groups

from the South East with a sizeable contingent from Brighton. Reports were given about activities which the various areas had participated in since the last 'Groundswell' meeting.

Pauline from Newham said that her group is providing help, support and information on the Council Tax Benefit, and they had organised a march against the new Incapacity Benefit.

The 'Exeter Claimants' Group' had been handing out leaflets at

the local dole office around the issue of the 'Job Seekers' Alliance' (JSA). Tony from Haringey reported on work being done in London on action around the JSA and the Incapacity Benefit.

A pilot scheme on the JSA was to be launched in Reading, and it was decided that the South East people would co-ordinate activity around this issue. They welcomed decisions on the part of trade unionists in the job centres for non-compliance with the JSA.

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# Inside left

## Platform for genocide

WATCHING the news of Bosnian Muslims being driven from their homes in Srebrenica and Zepa, an Irish comrade was reminded of Irish history, when Catholics were 'transplanted' — 'to hell, or Connaught', in Orwell's phrase.

Over 1,000 people demonstrated in Dublin on 20 July, against 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia, and for lifting the arms embargo.

But Serb nationalists' genocidal policies have their apologists. In the 'Morning Star' on 27 July, the 'Irish National Platform', accuses the Irish Parliament's foreign affairs committee of 'remarkable political irresponsibility' for demanding the UN force peace in Bosnia. This requires us to 'back one side in the Bosnian civil war... it protests.

Not that the 'Platform' opposes UN involvement. Lifting the arms embargo 'would lead to significant extra killing and bring greater profits to the international arms manufacturers,' it keens. 'For the UN to have former Yugoslavia altogether would also lead to greater slaughter and misery there, especially for the large civilian population that is now heavily reliant on UN aid.'

These people could feed themselves and others till driven off their land as refugees. But our 'caring' Stalinists say 'the international community' should 'maintain the flow of humanitarian aid', persuade 'the warring parties' to take account of 'uninvolved civilians', and 'stick strictly to the UN mandate as peacekeepers'.

The 'flow' of aid to people in Bihac stopped months ago. Serb Chetniks couldn't let food and medicine through. The UN Protection Force could not implement its mandate to safeguard supplies. Food reached Sarajevo only when the BiH army ran the gauntlet over Mt Igman. As a Bosnian placard on the non-stop picket says angrily: 'UN — If we could defend ourselves, we could feed ourselves. Keep your charity!'

The National Platform could have asked Dr Mary McLoughlin, whose messages from besieged Gorazde alerted the world last year. Dr McLoughlin was on the Dublin demonstration on 20 July. She says UN commanders knew about Serb plans to attack Srebrenica and Zepa, but did nothing.

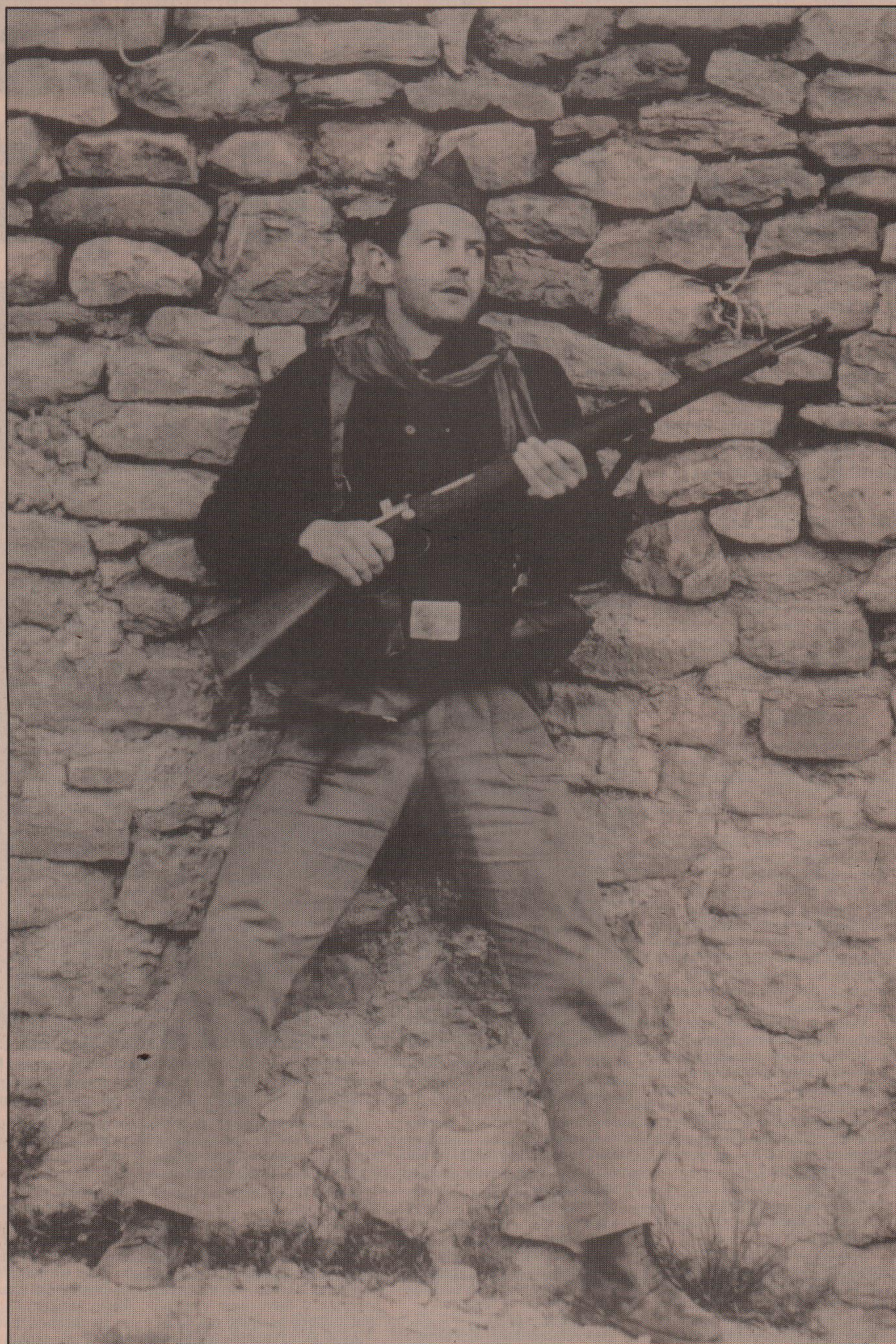
The Platform prefers quoting European Union mediator Carl Bildt, complaining the UN failed to demilitarise 'safe areas'. These Stalinists want Bosnians deprived of what little arms they have to defend their homes and families. That heroic, bedraggled column which fought its way through enemy lines from Srebrenica could have been massacred completely, as were others. So much more convenient.

'Irish public opinion has been conditioned' by media atrocity stories, the Stalinists insultingly claim; atrocities committed by 'the other side' are played down or ignored'. On the scale of Chetnik atrocities, the fact that they're part of Karadzic's stated policy of wiping Muslims 'off the face of the earth', are ignored by the 'Platform'.

Suggesting 'the principle of consent' (!) recognised for Ulster unionists should apply to Serb nationalists, claims Bosnia's independence referendum 'was understandably boycotted by Bosnia's one-third Serb minority' (in fact, Serbs voted except where prevented by Karadzic's thugs); the 'real crime' was recognition of Bosnia. Some 'national' platform!

The photograph of a fleeing refugee is captioned glibly: 'Pictures of the human cost of the war have reinforced misunderstanding among the Western public.' On the contrary, we understand more now, about Bosnia.

Charlie Pearce



Defending Republican Spain: David, an unemployed volunteer from Liverpool, played by Ian Hart



Wounded: David goes for treatment in Barcelona and has to rethink his Communist Party allegiance

Film review by Mike

# Land

KEN LOACH and Jim Allen's latest film 'Land and Freedom' will surely be the most important film of 1995 for the working-class movement. Everyone should make sure they see it so they can take part in the potentially explosive debate that seems likely on its general release on 6 October. It is being shown this weekend at the Edinburgh Film Festival (12 August, see page 6).

After its collapse in 1990, Stalinism's betrayal of the workers' movement and of revolution is clear to all except the most self-determined politically blind members of that movement.

'Land and Freedom' is a powerful portrayal in dramatic flesh-and-blood terms of those betrayals in one of the most tragic episodes of the workers' movement in the 20th century: the 1930s Spanish Revolution. It is extremely likely that this film could not have been made without the collapse of Stalinism preparing the way.

Indeed Jim Allen, who wrote the screenplay, says that the film is the fulfillment of a long-held desire and the result of five years' work — especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Stalinism throughout eastern Europe after 1989.

Behind the film, although this is not explicitly stated, must be the war in Bosnia. At one point one of the Spanish fighters tells the main character of the film, 'David', played by Ian Hart, that the support of those who have come from abroad to fight is good but that if the Republicans had the weapons denied them by the European arms embargo imposed by the policy of 'non-intervention', they could fight and win the war on their own.

The fascist states, Italy and Germany, openly broke the embargo to help Franco. This included troops from Italy and bombers and pilots from Germany. It was German Stukas that bombed Guernica. The meagre supplies from the Soviet Union came with political 'strings' and gave the initially miniscule Spanish Communist Party an unwarranted weight in the Republican government.

The fascist forces under General Franco killed some 400,000 during or after the war directly by firing squad rather than in conflict. The war as a whole killed 600,000.

## Denunciation

In Spain, where the film has already been released, criticism and denunciation have come from the church and the Communists (see Workers Press, 10 June). And in Britain, the Stalinist daily, the 'Morning Star', has responded with an extremely hostile review by Jeff Sawtell ('A spectre of revisionism', Friday 4 August) which accuses Loach of a 'scurrilous distortion of history' and of putting forward 'lies born of Trotskyite dogma'. I suspect the church in Britain may take a slightly more relaxed view.

I can't adequately express the moving nature of the film, its opening to a wider public, far beyond the supporters of Trotskyism, of this perspective of the Spanish Revolution long suppressed in Britain. (A view which George Orwell's 'Homage to Catalonia' supports and which was itself denigrated and suppressed by the Stalinist-dominated 'Left' establishment in 1938 and beyond.)

The film is punctuated by scenes of a young woman looking through the political effects of her grandfather, who at the beginning of the film dies on the way to hospital after



# David and Freedom

## A story from the Spanish Revolution

being found unconscious in his Liverpool housing-estate flat.

The first leaflets, pamphlets and newspapers she looks through show her grandfather to have been a supporter of the Socialist Labour League (SLL), and the Workers Revolutionary Party which the SLL became in 1972. Among the titles was an article in the League's paper 'The Newsletter', 'Labour's Fifth Column'. This is cheekily shown as being 'By Jim Allen' — a bit of dramatic licence since the original was 'By Cliff Slaughter'!

### Deeper

Then she looks deeper into the past at his leaflets, newspaper cuttings, letters, and personal objects and memorabilia from the Spanish Revolution.

Despite being a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain — 'the only one that is doing anything', he says — David decides to go to Spain on his own initiative and not because of the 'Party', after seeing a film presented by a Spanish Republican at a public meeting in Liverpool. Unemployed, David tells his girlfriend that he had 'nothing' at home.

David arrives in Spain and joins a militia unit under the control of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (the POUM). This was the fusion of former members of the international Trotskyist movement, the Left Opposition, led by Andres Nin, other dissident communist organisations and the Catalan-nationalist Workers' and Peasants' Bloc.

The POUM was not a Trotskyist organisation and did not seek to be one. However, it was opposed to the Stalinist Communist Party and the POUM's leadership, including Nin, and many of its members were arrested towards the end of the civil war. It is not known for sure what happened to these people, but they were handed over to Stalinist forces (the GPU secret police) and must from there have been 'interrogated' (i.e. tortured) and killed.

As a loyal party member, David is on the 'right' in his POUM militia unit, along with an American who later takes part in the 'arrests' of POUM leaders in the unit.

These two support a peasant of a liberated village who opposes the collectivisation of the land, arguing that he has worked hard on his little plot of land, with the implication that others have not. The vote goes against him and he certainly doesn't look well pleased by the result. Such as he were no doubt not particularly saddened when Franco won the war in late 1938, and had formed some of the growing support for the Communists in the preceding period. David is also attracted by the argument of the American that by toning down the revolutionary struggle Spain would gain international respectability and hence weapons from capitalist countries.

A strength of the film is that it doesn't just support one side without trying to understand the forces behind the other. Problems like the peasant desire for land ownership can't simply be 'resolved' by 'answers' such as collectivisation. A political class struggle has to be carried through and won.

The pinnacle of the political struggle for David's soul, that surely lays the ground for his support of the Socialist Labour League in later life,

takes place in Barcelona where he goes to be treated for a wound received in battle. There he joins the more 'organised' International Brigade, controlled by the Communists. He is disturbed by the way its energies are spent controlling Barcelona, against the revolutionary forces — the POUM and the anarchists. David is already disturbed to see the police have weapons that would have been better used at the front against Franco's forces.

For a short while previously, Barcelona had come into the hands of working-class forces. The 'Communists' opposed this and were handed control of the police and internal 'security' by the Popular Front government.

In one scene, David is at the Communist Party HQ opposite anarchist forces, rifles trained on each other. He finds one of the anarchists has come from Manchester and they express their confusion to each other as to why they are there and not at the front fighting Franco's forces.

But it's not until he is sitting in a bar listening to arrogant young Spanish recruits to the Communist Party deriding the militias' effectiveness. From his own experience of taking several towns and villages for the Republic while with the militia and, presumably, the futility of his activity while with the International Brigades, he confronts the young man and is only persuaded by the understanding bartender not to start a fight. He goes back to his room to rip up his party card and then rejoins the militia.

After this the film soon ends with a personal tragedy during the Stalinists' rounding-up of the POUM's leaders and disbandment of the militia unit. The army commander in charge of disbanding the unit has the same arrogant manner that a cap-

itured fascist commander had shown earlier in the film. David returns home.

The film ends back in the present at David's funeral. Among his effects, his granddaughter has found a handful of gravel from Spain wrapped in a red neckerchief. This she throws onto his coffin after saying a few words. Crushing the neckerchief and holding it up, she joins with his old comrades gathered at the graveside to sing the 'Internationale'.

An important aspect of the film that developed during the filming was the role of women in the militia unit. Initially they are equal fighters with the men, but as the grip of the Stalinists increases they are converted into nurses and cooks.

Jim Allen says the political background to the film was for him the easy part: 'It was nothing new to me. It comes out of my experience. The arguments of that militia section in the Spanish trench I've had with the Communists over the years, the same criticisms, the same answers, it was not too difficult.'

However, it's got to be relevant to today, otherwise it's meaningless, a historical tombstone. The film shows a group of people prepared to offer their lives for some big noble principles. It's a million miles from the cynical outlook on life.

'You've got to imagine the tremendous emotional and political appeal of Spain in 1936. Oppressed for centuries, it became the scene of one of the few just wars in the world and hundreds of thousands of workers came to defend the Spanish Republic, a beleaguered, isolated outpost in a struggle that could have inflicted a devastating defeat on fascism. But instead, young lives were used, they were cynically betrayed.'

And, 'had Franco been defeated, there may not have been World War

II: Hitler and Mussolini deliberately used Spain as a laboratory, a testing ground for their equipment and troops. And when the democratically elected republic requested arms from the democracies of Britain and France they refused and instead watched the Spanish Republic being slaughtered. The whole scenario could have been changed if Franco had been defeated.'

Allen does not suggest the Communists wanted fascism 'but they didn't trust the working class and made overtures to the capitalist system. They knew that if a democratic revolution had succeeded in Spain then Stalin's days were numbered. The dictatorship in Russia would not have been tolerated.'

David, was like many volunteers, 'an innocent about the Soviet dictatorship, the murders and the show trials', says Allen. The newspaper cuttings of the revolution all come from the Communist Party's 'Daily Worker'. But the last of these shown has 'LIES!' emphatically written on a cutting accusing the Trotskyists of being traitors. Clearly, David didn't stay innocent.

### Militia

Of the militia unit, Allen says: 'None of them had any real theory. They saw it as a struggle between good and evil, but in the course of the action the betrayals of Stalinism become revealed.'

In February 1939, Trotsky gave the following assessment: 'One of the most tragic chapters of modern history is now drawing to its conclusion in Spain. On Franco's side there is neither a staunch army nor popular support. There is only the greed of proprietors ready to drown in blood three-fourths of the population if only to maintain their rule over the

remaining one-fourth. However, this cannibalistic ferocity is not enough to win a victory over the heroic Spanish proletariat. Franco needed help from the opposite side of the battlefield. And he obtained this aid. His chief assistant was and still is Stalin, the gravedigger of the Bolshevik Party and the proletarian revolution. The fall of the great proletarian capital, Barcelona, comes as direct retribution for the massacre of the Barcelona proletariat in May 1937.

'Insignificant as Franco himself is, however miserable his clique of adventurists, without honour, without conscience, and without military talents, Franco's great superiority lies in this, that he has a clear and definite programme: to safeguard and stabilise capitalist property, the rule of the exploiters, and the domination of the church; and to restore the monarchy.

'The possessing classes of all capitalist countries — whether fascist or democratic — proved, in the nature of things, to be on Franco's side. The Spanish bourgeoisie has gone completely over to Franco's camp. At the head of the republican camp, there remained the cast-off "democratic" armour-bearers of the bourgeoisie. These gentlemen could not desert to the side of fascism, for the very sources of their influence and income spring from the institutions of bourgeois democracy, which require (or used to require!) for their normal functioning lawyers, deputies, journalists, in short, the democratic champions of capitalism.'

The defeat of the Spanish Revolution is not a 'classical' tragedy. In Greek drama a tragedies were defined by heroes who destroyed themselves. The Spanish Revolution did not destroy itself — it was destroyed by forces outside itself!

## Stalin feared Trotskyism in Britain

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

STALIN, and others high in the Soviet state apparatus, feared the influence of Trotskyists in the British labour movement in the aftermath of the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, top secret documents of the NKVD secret police, now available to historians in Moscow, have revealed.

Having decapitated the Red Army in the murderous late 1930s purges, Stalin, in August 1939, sought to keep the Soviet Union out of the war, and secure a free hand in the Baltic and Balkan states, by signing a non-aggression pact with the Nazi regime. Trotsky, exiled in Mexico, commented that Stalin now stood exposed as Hitler's accomplice or 'intendant'.

In April 1939 (anticipating the possibility of the pact), and then in late August, V. Dekanosov, head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR (NKVD), prepared memoranda on the impact of this policy in Britain for George Dimitrov and Otto Kuusinen — the top officials of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). The practice was for such documents to be passed to the Soviet dictator himself.

The existence of these documents was reported by Yevgeny Sergeev of

Moscow State University to an imaginative recent conference at the University of Exeter, organised to discuss the use of new archives from the former Soviet Union to further research on the history of the Communist International (Comintern), from its origins during World War I and foundation in 1919, through to its dissolution by Stalin in 1943.

The main concern of NKVD agents in Britain was not the direct activities of the small Trotskyist groups, but rather the influence of Trotsky's ideas in bodies such as the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC) and, especially, the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), it was reported, was in no shape to counter the influence of Trotskyist propaganda on that section of the working class, and 'public opinion' generally, which was sympathetic to the Soviet Union but likely to be bewildered by the Nazi-Soviet détente.

### Dispatches

CPGB members, according to agents' dispatches, could not adequately distinguish Trotskyist interventions at meetings and combat them effectively. There had been too little effort to spread the word as it was contained in the notorious 'His-

tory of the Bolshevik Party (CPSU): Short Course'. And leading British Communists were too prone to participate in an unguarded way in the NCLC, the Left Book Club and the No Conscription Federation.

The Trotskyists had a much more vigorous publishing programme than the Communists, the reports complained. It was also stated — with some exaggeration — that they were in effective control of the Glasgow ILP weekly, 'Forward'. Trotskyist influence in the ILP was particularly worrying, it was reported, because that organisation remained a significant force, with MPs, a popular periodical 'New Leader', and substantial international links, notably in Spain and France.

Sergeev's very interesting report, to be published in the conference proceedings, will add to a small but growing body of work which — from a number of different points of view — is rescuing the history of Trotskyism from the enormous ignorance of posterity, and, in particular, of intellectuals influenced by Stalinism. Important examples of this work in English include Ngo Van's recently published work on the Vietnamese Trotskyists, Bill Hunter's on the struggles of British dockers, some recent autobiographies, and many articles in the pathbreaking journal 'Revolutionary History'.

What is involved here is not simply setting the record straight or filling in blank spots in historical consciousness, but a potential recasting of how the twentieth century is understood — particularly the period since the Russian revolution of October 1917.

### Consensus

Essential to the dominant liberal/Stalinist consensus has been the conception that Trotskyism was a marginal force with its advocates doomed to irrelevance, or perhaps martyrdom, by the march of progress.

The term Trotskyism in such a view of recent history refers not so much to the details of a much argued-over doctrine but the very conception of revolution led by the working class. As Trotsky himself put it in 1935, explaining the crucial role of Lenin's prestige in the success of the Bolshevik revolution:

'If Lenin had not been in Petersburg, I doubt whether I [alone] could have managed to overcome the resistance of the Bolshevik leaders. The struggle with "Trotskyism" (i.e., with the proletarian revolution) would have commenced in May 1917 [rather than in 1924], and the outcome of the revolution [itself] would have been in question.'



## An impudent liar

THERE are, it seems, no limits to the impudence of those who back up their attacks on Marxism by forging spurious quotations from Karl Marx.

A forger from the same school of falsification as Nathaniel Weyl (see this column, 24 June) is a gentleman by the name of Andrew Lightfoot, who wrote from Bridlington, Yorkshire, in the 'Sunday Telegraph' of 23 July.

It is an unpleasant irony that, as the world's Marxists prepare for the 150th anniversary of the publication of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848), the British, among other nations, should be beset with a venomous [sic] breakdown of family and community life.

'As the founder of communism, a degenerate, ignoble political ideology designed to eradicate national and cultural consciousness, Marx wrote: "We must bring about the destruction of family life and parental responsibility."

'This command, it seems, is being obeyed; child homelessness and ungodly parenthood (the awful abuse and neglect of children) are widespread in our society. . . . [U]nless society adheres once more to traditionalism, especially in religion . . . the evil demands of Karl Marx shall readily be conformed with.'

Mr Lightfoot, who sets so much store by 'traditionalism', should know that in honest polemic there is a tradition of scrupulous accuracy in quotation. In his anxiety to attribute homelessness and child abuse to those 'evil' Marxists, rather than to capitalist society, he turns his back on this tradition.

Marx, of course, never made the call here absurdly attributed to him for 'the destruction of family life and parental responsibility'. What he did do, in the 'Communist Manifesto' and elsewhere, was to quote ironically various accusations of that kind made by enemies of communism, the better to wipe the floor with his opponents.

Mr Lightfoot, in short, is a liar.

## MacIntyre's Marxism

READER John McIlroy of Manchester points out that I underestimated the duration of Alasdair MacIntyre's adherence to Marxism when I wrote (1 July) that he considered himself a Marxist 'for a brief spell in the late 1950s'. John writes:

'In the second (1969) edition of "Marxism and Christianity" he states that in 1953, when he wrote the first edition, he aspired to be both a Marxist and a Christian. He saw Marxism in 1953 as embodied by the Communist Party, and its "crudity" was "a chief source of difficulty".'

'He was caught up in the 1956 ferment [in the CP], contributed to Edward Thompson and John Saville's "New Reasoner", and saw the Socialist Labour League as a solution to the "difficulty".'

'He was not just intellectually active in the SLL but was involved in Leeds Labour Party on their behalf in 1959-60.'

'He also wrote several pieces for Tony Cliff's "Socialist Review" whilst editing it. His name appears on the editorial board roster of "International Socialism" as late as no. 32 (Spring 1968), though I imagine he played a decreasing role through the 1960s.'

'All of this demonstrates involvement with Marxist organisations of one sort or another over two decades and strengthens your main point — that academics seek increasingly to write Marxism out of the post-war experience.'

The grateful to John McIlroy

## PERSONAL COLUMN

for this correction and clarification — all the more so since MacIntyre went out of his way to apologise to me in 1960 for having joined in Gerry Healy's attacks on me when I left the SLL in the previous year. I certainly wouldn't wish to misrepresent the early career of this latterly eminent rescuer of 'moral tradition'.

## A voice from Brazil

'SOCIALIST VOICE', journal of the International Socialist League (the British section of the International Workers' League), is always of great interest.

The July-August issue is of special interest for, amongst other contributions, a hard-hitting piece by Wilson da Silva, a black activist in Brazil's United Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU).

This letter from Wilson da Silva to our comrades of the African Liberation Solidarity Campaign gives the best brief account I've seen of the fight against racism in Brazil — and the best brief exposure of the myth of Brazil's 'racial democracy'.

The letter recalls Brazil's long, and long-neglected, history of slave rebellions and makes special reference to the 'Quilombo dos Palmares', the 17th-century free state set up by runaway black slaves in the north-east of Brazil, which served also as a shelter for poor whites and Amerindians.

Wilson da Silva states correctly that slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888 under the pressure of British imperialism, 'eager to include Brazil among the countries with a paid labour force'.

He might have added, as determining factors, the ever-present threat of slave rebellion, and the increasing support being given to runaways by the rest of Brazil's working population.

What finally tipped the scales was the refusal of the Brazilian army, with the implicit threat of mutiny, to act any longer as slave-hunters.

## Ignorant critic

WHILE we're on the subject of Brazil, I have to register my surprise at a recent notice in the 'Guardian' of a London concert by the Brazilian singer Gil Costa.

The critic began by saying that the event had drawn large numbers of Brazilians resident in London 'out of the woodwork', an expression which properly refers to insects and seems to me an unfortunate one to apply to human beings.

He went on to show his ignorance of Brazilian music by referring to an instrument 'like a longbow', with a 'tropical' sound. By this he meant the now widely known *berimbau*, a single-string musical bow which originated in Angola, where it is still made and played almost exactly as it is in Brazil.

In fact, there's only one difference between them: in Brazil the string is 'stopped', to give a higher note, by means of a metal disk called a *dobrão* (cf. 'doubloon'); in Angola the player 'stops' the string with his thumb-nail.

The 'Guardian' makes some strange editorial decisions, in its political and cultural coverage alike, but none stranger than sending someone to cover a concert of Brazilian music who obviously doesn't know the first thing about it.

Peter Fryer

## Edinburgh Festival

# Fighters against fascism and Scots women in bondage

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

KEN LOACH's new film about the Spanish civil war, 'Land and Freedom', launches the Edinburgh Film Festival this weekend, chosen for the opening gala, say the organisers, because although there are 'starrer pictures around and good new American movies . . . no other film this year reminds us more of the power of cinema.'

Dave Carr from Liverpool in the 1930s joins the anti-fascist militia in Spain, and becomes involved with the POUM, a would-be Marxist party destined to fall victim to the Communist International's strategy of supporting the bourgeois republic not only against Franco's Falangists but also — and more decisively — against the revolutionary masses. A rare anti-Stalinist contribution to socialist cinema, it has already caused controversy in France and Spain itself (see review, centre pages).

Edinburgh's collection of annual festivals run from now until the end of August, or the beginning of September (except the Jazz Festival which has finished). The main event — the 49th Edinburgh International Festival — has already announced sellouts for the Kirov Opera, popular regular visitors the Mark Morris Dance Company, and several of classical concerts.

And in the multi-faceted Fringe festival, the Traverse Theatre has staged a coup by mounting the world premiere of Ariel (Death and the Maiden) Dorfman's new play, Reader (see picture). The world renowned Fringe venue is also assured of success with the revival of its 1991 production of Sue Glover's *Bondagers*.

## Suffered

Glover's play is about women who suffered under a system of agricultural labour operating in south-east Scotland and north-east England in the second half of the 19th century, and continuing in parts of that area until World War II. *Bondagers* were single women who had to sell themselves to a male farm worker — or 'hind' — at an annual hiring fair. The hind's contract with the tenant farmer obliged him to supply such a labourer to work with him.



'This is called a . . . bosom,' says Don Alfonso, or is it Daniel Lucas (played by Clive Merrison)? 'Tit, my love, it's a darling tit,' rejoins Jacqueline, or is it Irene (Hermione Norris). 'Such an expert with words, and you never manage to call things by their names.' Ariel Dorfman's new play *Reader*, premiered at this year's Edinburgh Fringe festival by the Traverse Theatre, brings a world of self-validating sexual and political manoeuvre into conflict with outside human aspiration, as the staff of the Department of Moral Resources in some future authoritarian 'Paradise' carry out their ghastly, and brutal, censorious tasks. Latin American angst given more general relevance by one of today's most intriguing dramatists in a stylishly-designed and well-acted production. It's hard work until the interval, but don't give up. All (or almost all) becomes clear thereafter. Photo: Sean Hudson

## Safety 'not taken seriously' Coach and bus firms cut corners on maintenance

BY ROY THOMAS

FOLLOWING the deregulation of bus and coach services, and the headlong drive to make as much profit as possible, never mind the passengers, corner-cutting on maintenance of buses and coaches has reached crisis point.

Following spot checks on school buses and coaches in the West Country, 30 per cent were found to have serious defects. Now spot checks on holiday coaches have revealed the same picture.

Chief Inspector Martyn Snell of Avon and Somerset police is quoted as saying: 'I am very sad that some operators are not taking us seriously. On one day more than 2,000 people were travelling on coaches which had such serious faults that they were ordered off the road.'

The trade press is now warning bus and coach owners of the danger of the wheels coming off their vehicles. A series of such cases has revealed a widespread

problem. While the trade say this may be due to higher speeds, it is clearly related to the cut back in regular maintenance checks.

When Somerset council checked school buses in July they found one school bus had a wheel with only two wheelnuts — and they were only finger-tight. One National Express coach lost two wheels near Pewsey in Wiltshire in July. So bad has the problem become that there are now calls for a regulator to regulate the deregulated bus and coach industry.

The other danger to passengers is the length of time drivers are behind the wheel without a break. Following the decision to summons the management of the company whose bus overturned on the M2 killing nine people, French police have arrested two directors of the company whose coach crashed in France, killing 23 holidaymakers. The tachograph showed that not only had the coach been speeding, but the drivers had been working for two weeks without a break.

## Communist Party may split TGWU Left

BY MARY IDE

COMMUNIST Party of Britain (CPB) members in the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) may be called upon to carry out a split in the union's left-wing, to back a party member's candidature in union executive elections.

The Party's shrinking membership in the TGWU has been in a crisis since the death of union executive member Peter Haggart earlier this year.

Haggart led the 'broad left' on the executive for many years. His death was marked by sheaves of tributes in the 'Morning Star', whose politics are approximately those of the Communist Party of Britain. Although he always said he was not a member, he was considered to be their man.

The CPB central committee meeting in London this weekend will discuss a replacement for Haggart. The proposal on their agenda is to dump well-known left-winger Steve Riley, one of the executive members for Re-

The women were paid half the wages of the men, and nothing at all on the days they were ill or there was no work. The hind was responsible for lodging his bondager, which could lead to seething sexual tension in household where there was also wife caring for young children.

When I first saw the production I wrote in *Workers Press* (18 May 1991) that the play is distinguished by the quality of the writing, by the subtlety of its dramatic rhythms, and by the contemporary resonances of its historical statement.

## Inspired

"Bondagers" is an agonisingly crafted piece, inspired by the inner logic of the situation it deals with, and by the dramatic imperative to give voice to imagined characters which allows them their own independence from their creator. It is a challenging play.'

It challenges the view that history is something to do with 'national' — or any other sort of — 'heritage'; that it is something to accumulate knowledge about rather than to wrestle with. It challenges male lip-service to feminist sensibilities by taking us into an imagined but very real world of the emotions of women, about whom it is all too easy to assume that they were so oppressed that they didn't have time for emotions at all.

And it challenges audiences to grasp the nuances of a complex class structure as it was seen and experienced by these women. And to grapple with — for most — an unfamiliar language which Glover has mastered with exemplary care.

'It does all this,' I wrote, 'without a hint of tub-thumping. The six characters in the play evolve as real individuals, bound together through their collective experience. They live through the cycle of the seasons, dominated by grinding labour, yet striving for fulfilment and yearning for news of menfolk banished by economic necessity to the open spaces of Canada.'

This is a production of one of the best pieces of contemporary Scottish drama there is, a contribution to English-speaking theatre that is likely to stand the test of time. If you can be in Edinburgh over the next three weeks, don't miss it.

## Replacement

Discussion at the CPB Central Committee may revolve around the replacement of Steve Riley with a close colleague of Haggart, like him a taxi driver, Pat Hicks, brother of CPB general secretary Mike Hicks.

Such a move will mean that CPB members in the TGWU may have to set up a new left organisation to promote their policy and candidate.

This decision may already have been taken when Pat Hicks got himself elected as vice-chair of the Regional Committee last month, in opposition to the left candidate.

Watch *Workers Press* for a full report on the CPB central committee's decisions.



# Ernest Mandel

## 1923-95



Ernest Mandel

ERNEST MANDEL, a central figure in the Trotskyist movement over the last four decades or so, has died in Brussels, aged 73. From the early 1950s onwards Mandel was a prominent figure in the organisation that became known as the United Secretariat, a body claiming to continue the political work of Leon Trotsky.

The organisation to which he belonged had actually originated in a split within the Trotskyist movement when Mandel, hesitantly at first, had joined with others, notably Michael Pablo, in declaring that — under the new world conditions that they claimed were then emerging — the Stalinist bureaucracy, or at least elements within it, could be pressurised in a revolutionary direction.

It was this political line, and the conceptions on which it was based, that Mandel sought to defend for the rest of his political life. In so doing he was responsible for leading a current in the labour movement, which while claiming to be Trotskyist, was in fact responsible for serious and fundamental revisions of the Trotskyist programme and of the Marxist world outlook.

Mandel was born in Antwerp on 5 April, 1923. His father, Henri, had moved to Frankfurt in order to help the German communists set up a branch of the Soviet Press Agency. In the turmoil then gripping Germany, Mandel senior decided to move to Antwerp where Ernest was born and was to spend his childhood. (It seems that his father, disillusioned with the developments taking place in the Comintern, soon dropped out of any active politics.)

Mandel was 16 when World War II broke out and by the following year he was active in the Belgian Resistance. Disgusted by the activities of the Belgian social democrats, whose leader, then deputy prime minister, made a public appeal for collaboration with the Nazis, Mandel had already come under the influence of a small Trotskyist group led by Abraham Leon, and joined his organisation in 1939.

Leon, author of 'On the Jewish Question' was to die at the hands of the Nazis, gassed as a young man of 26 in early 1944. Mandel was to write a moving sketch of Leon's life which first appeared in French in 1946. Mandel himself was arrested by the occupying forces three times but managed to escape, on one occasion with the help of some socialists among his guards.

It was after the war that Mandel devoted his energies to the building of the Fourth International and like everyone else, he must be judged against the background of his times.

The period after 1945 was one of enormous difficulties for those engaged in this task. The Trotskyist movement, with its leader Leon Trotsky already assassinated by an agent of Stalin in 1940, emerged from the war with many of its cadres having been murdered either by the Nazis or the Stalinists.

Its forces were tiny, especially in Europe where the persecution against it had been heaviest. It suffered considerable internal

movements such as that led by Fidel Castro.

In other words, Mandel was unable to grasp the nature of the new, unexpected, conditions which the movement faced after the war. Indeed very few were able to, and even then they did in a far from smooth or 'perfect' manner.

Towards the end of Mandel's life, history was to pronounce its cruel judgement on the conceptions which he had for decades defended. For the ignominious collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and throughout eastern Europe put the final nail in the coffin for those who had defended the so-called 'progressive' character of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Despite Mandel's claims at the end of his life that nothing fundamental had changed, in fact quite new conditions for the re-building of the Fourth International have now opened up.

It was this line in relation to the Stalinist bureaucracy that Mandel defended for the rest of his life and in so doing was responsible for great damage and confusion amongst many of those who wanted to be Trotskyists and fight for the re-building of the Fourth International.

Mandel's revision of the notion of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a counter-revolutionary agency of imperialism within the working-class movement was not and could not have been simply a revision of one part or aspect of the programme of the Fourth International.

For underlying it were quite different, indeed opposed, conceptions of the very nature of the epoch to those on which the Fourth International and the Comintern before it had been based.

Much of Mandel's later work was spent in elaborating these opposed conceptions. He did so in a series of works, including 'Marxist Economic Theory' (1962); 'Late Capitalism' (1972) and a book based on a series of lectures he delivered in the University of Cambridge subsequently published as 'Long Waves of Capitalist Development'.

This last work was indicative of Mandel's overall approach: it was the attempt of an eclectic to marry elements from the work of the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev (who earlier in the century had claimed to discern, as well as the ups and downs of the trade cycle, longer movements in the rhythm of capitalism that stretched over periods of 20 to 30 years) with what Mandel took to be Marxism.

It was in the course of this work that Mandel came to the conclusion that capitalism had entered a new phase of its development which he dubbed 'neocapitalism'. This supposed new stage, which, said Mandel, was as different from imperialism as

imperialism had been from 'classical', 'competitive' capitalism, was based on the growing symbiosis of the state and the economy.

Indeed, argued Mandel, capitalism after World War II had experienced a new, a third, industrial revolution based on a range of new industries centred on the micro-chip.

In taking this position Mandel was challenging the Marxist conception, elaborated classically by Engels in his work 'The Condition of the Working Class', that the industrial revolution of the late 18th/early 19th century was above all a social revolution that involved the emergence of new class relations.

### Conceptions

Here was just one instance of the degree to which he and his co-thinkers had capitulated theoretically to the conceptions of Stalinism — with its talk of 'state-monopoly capitalism' and 'the scientific and technological revolution' which had supposedly taken place after 1945.

Involved here was a challenge by Mandel to the conception of the present epoch as one in which the productive forces stagnated. If indeed the productive forces could continue to grow and develop, if capitalism could experience new 'industrial revolutions' then the historic necessity for socialism was in fact called into question, being replaced at best by some abstract moral imperative.

Given these ideas, which ultimately had more in common with bourgeois sociology than Marxism, it is little wonder that Mandel found ready publishers. His books were translated into many languages, with the English editions usually appearing under the imprint of the New Left with whom Mandel had close personal and political relations.

This notice is written by a member of an organisation that has been a political opponent of Ernest Mandel for a period of time stretching over four decades and more. Indeed the Workers International and the Workers Revolutionary Party trace their origin to the split with Mandel-Pablo in 1953.

But, having said that, it must be recorded that unlike many other intellectuals, the majority of whom were open apologists for the capitalist order or for the Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies that defended that order, Mandel did try and speak for the Fourth International as he understood it. And that is to his lasting credit.

One of the tasks of the generations who will carry forward the re-building of the working class movement and of the Fourth International is to study the life of leaders such as Mandel, with neither fear nor favour.

In this way, and in this spirit, the positive contribution that he undoubtedly made in his very young days when he first entered the ranks of the Fourth International as a boy of 16 in Belgium will be preserved and made a weapon for the great struggles that lie ahead.

Geoff Pilling

## Science focus

A monthly column by Daniel Robertson, principal scientist at a leading bio-technology company

### It's still raining acid

DO YOU remember acid rain? The damage being done to buildings by industrial deposits, and particularly the possibility that acid rain may actually be dissolving them away, was one of the first indications of growing environmental decay.

The impact of acid rain on the forests of Europe later became apparent, and was a major factor in prompting the growth of the Greens in Germany. But surely governments and industries realised the danger years ago and took action to stop a disaster hitting what's left of our natural heritage?

It appears not!

Restrictions on sulphur dioxide, a major culprit, have been designed to protect sources of profit such as fisheries and plantation forests.

Sensitive areas, including a majority of Europe's nature reserves, are still being left under threat according to a report from the World Wide Fund for Nature. But who ever made a profit from a nature reserve?

Meanwhile government scientists continue to argue that everything is fine. The amateurish methods used by some environmentalists leave them open to challenge — establishing truth in the environmental sciences is always contentious because of the impact of political vested interests.

But I have a shrewd suspicion that government-paid scientists are one of these vested interests.

### Doomray

IT's amazing how the duplicity of the nuclear industry has been reflected in the names of the places it has chosen to pollute with its products.

The unfortunate associations of Windscale — the name conjures up images of wind blown radioactive debris — led to the public relations exercise of renaming it Sellafield. This projects a much happier image of green fields untouched by human-created pollution.

Dounreay has never benefited from this dishonesty; perhaps they think the public would not be fooled twice. To me the name could be from a 50s science fiction B movie with alien death rays and martians.

Recent revelations suggest that it lives up to its apocalyptic associations.

It has recently emerged that an 'incident' in 1977 when radioactive material was accidentally released was far more serious than has been admitted for nearly two decades.

This is yet another example of the nuclear industry's blatant lying to the public about its safety record.

Apparently the boffins responsible for this accident had forgotten their O-level chemistry. No less than 2 kilograms of pure sodium and potassium metals were dumped down a shaft full of sea water heavily loaded with radioactive waste.

Can you remember the spectacular results when your chemistry teacher dropped a tiny piece of sodium into water?

These geniuses clearly did not and the resulting explosion

sprayed deadly radioactive particles over the surrounding area.

These particles, many of which are radioactive enough to cause death within days from a single ingestion, have been washing up on the beaches nearby ever since.

Dounreay is the site of one of the clusters of childhood leukaemias that the nuclear industry insists are nothing to do with them. Work it out for yourself.

This was the most serious release of radioactivity to have occurred in Britain but its scale was kept a closely guarded secret.

We know now that the whole purpose of Britain's nuclear industry was actually to provide material for nuclear weapons, despite the lying propaganda about electricity that would be so cheap it would be free.

Hence the secrecy and dishonesty. Isn't democracy wonderful!

### No race but the human race

THE claims of racists that the various elements of humanity are made up of biologically distinct races with a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority has recently come under scientific scrutiny.

In the 19th century, Darwinist ideas of the survival of the fittest were used to provide justifications for concepts of hierarchy, race and class domination. Now the new genetics of DNA technology, especially fingerprinting techniques, have been called upon to provide means of providing distinct genetic profiles for different races.

The aim of these geneticists is to provide forensic evidence for tracing racial origins from forensic materials, or to construct a human 'family tree'.

But this concept poses a range of dangers from reinforcing prejudices about the rigidity of racial classifications to nightmare possibilities of fascist governments using it as a means of ethnic cleansing.

The weakness of this 'science' has recently been demonstrated in a book by the respected US scientist Jonathan Marks. He argues that genetic fingerprinting may well be able to demonstrate varying proportions of particular genetic sequences in peoples found in different locations or even genes found in only some members of particular populations.

But it is impossible to find distinct markers that unequivocally correspond to particular groups of people.

The reality is that the human race is not divided into specific and distinct races. Instead we find an infinite gradation of apparent physical appearance, largely based on regional adaptation to climate, but also a great degree of genetic homogeneity.

This reflects the process of migration and intermingling that is so typically human. The human gene pool is continually being remixed.

Genetic variability within populations is as great as between them. Concepts of racial inferiority, or racially based intellectual and psychological differences, are a scientific nonsense.

## Bangladeshi garment workers prepare for strike to demand a day-off a week

Bangladesh's million-plus garment workers have called for support from the international labour movement for a new campaign to bring an end to slave labour in the industry.

Under the campaign slogan: 'No More Labour Slavery! Total Leave on Friday is a Must!' they have warned the employers that if by 31 September a day's holiday every Friday is not granted

then workers will take strike action on that day every week from the beginning of October onwards.

Garment manufacture provides 60 per cent of the country's export earnings, amounting to some \$2 billion annually.

Yet four out of five workers in the industry are women who on average earn about £6 a month. For this paltry sum they have to

work from 8 in the morning to 10 or 11 o'clock each night, seven days a week.

Employers regularly refuse to give workers their statutory rights: to transport, medical facilities, the right to belong to a trade union. There are no maternity rights, no child care facilities.

Most of the industry's workers come from rural areas. They are separated from

their friends, families, even from their children.

Messages of support should be sent to:

Amirul Haque Amin  
General Secretary  
National Garment Workers Federation  
G.P.O. Box 864  
Dhaka  
Bangladesh  
Fax: 00-880-2-867-485



# Bihac breathes again: but no thanks to UN

**AFTER** enduring siege, shelling and starvation at the hands of surrounding Serb nationalist forces and their allies, the people in the Bihac area of north-west Bosnia breathed a sigh of relief last week, thanks to the Croatian army's smashing of the Serb Chetnik gangster-statelet in the neighbouring Krajina.

Only a week before, Serb shells were raining on Bihac at up to a 1,000 per hour. General Mladic, the butcher of Srebrenica, had ordered his troops onto the attack, co-ordinated with Serb Chetnik forces from the Krajina, and those loyal to the Muslim renegade and convicted racketeer Fikret Abdic.

There were fears that the 160,000 population of Bihac, where the first deaths from starvation due to the siege had been reported, might face the same horrific fate as befell the people of Srebrenica and Zepa, 'safe havens' seized by Serb forces and 'ethnically cleansed' last month.

## Triumph

On Monday, 7 August, as Croatia celebrated its triumph in Knin, the Krajina Serb 'capital', the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) army's 5th corps recaptured the town of Velika Kladusa, routing Abdic's forces. The local warlord was reported missing, as was Krajina Serb nationalist 'president' and war criminal Milan Martić.

People in Bihac, and for that matter in Bosnia, had given up

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

expecting anything other than hypocrisy and treachery from the UN, the European Union and NATO. The withdrawal of French UN troops before the Serb offensive last Autumn was not forgotten. UN Protection Forces failed to protect food deliveries to Bihac, whereas (as Lord Owen confirmed) they delivered fuel to the Krajina and, it's suspected, let military equipment through.

## Advanced

As Mladic advanced on Bihac with 52,000 well-armed troops, there were only 1,300 poorly-armed Bangladeshi UN troops there.

Britain's Defence Secretary Michael Portillo and his US counterpart William Perry agreed in Washington on 31 July that nothing should be done to protect Bihac.

'No clear line on the ground can be drawn,' Portillo stated. He went on to warn Croatia against taking action, too, saying it would lead to wider war. Portillo also claimed that lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia would lead to more killings.

In other words, the Tory government's message for Bosnians was 'We won't protect you, and we forbid you or your allies to do so either.' The people in Bihac could die quietly, off camera, and not disturb the 'peace'!

This is the same Portillo who had the gall last week to equate the flight of Krajina Serbs from the Croat offensive with the deliberate expulsion and genocide carried out by Serbia's Chetniks,



Refugees 'ethnically cleansed' from their homes in Srebrenica and sent to Tuzla

saying that 'where people were driven from their homes ... that amounts to ethnic cleansing'.

Ironically, if it hadn't been for the British and French governments' arms embargo against Republican Spain during the Civil War, Portillo's father might not have had to leave his home as a refugee.

But it may be more relevant that one of the Tory Defence Secretary's close friends, appointed as an adviser by his predecessor (now Foreign Secretary) Malcolm Rifkind, is David Hart, the wealthy right-winger who was Margaret Thatcher's hidden hand against the miners, and says Britain should back the nationalist Serbs.

So far, despite every effort, neither the BBC nor other media have come up with evidence of deliberate 'ethnic cleansing' in

Krajina, or anything like the barbarities committed by the Chetniks in Srebrenica.

Of course, we must sympathise with ordinary Serb people, in the Krajina or anywhere else, caught up in the fighting. Their fears have been exploited by the nationalist gangsters more than once. Their rights should be respected by Croatia.

## Exodus

The Krajina Serb exodus appears more the result of engineered panic than 'ethnic cleansing', with some civilians evacuated in advance, and more than 50,000 armed soldiers among those entering Serb-held Bosnia.

Quite apart from the siege of Bihac, Krajina's use as a base to target Croatia's capital Zagreb with missiles, and threaten links

with the coast, made it necessary to smash the Serb gangster-statelet. A cease-fire was broken by Serb planes from occupied-Bosnia making strikes into Croatia.

Many Krajina people were fed up with the corrupt 'Serb Republic', whose leaders were crooks, and had predicted its collapse.

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had sent in his own deputy chief of staff General Mrksic, with officers and tanks, and his police rounded up thousands of unwilling conscripts, but to no avail.

Many Serbs simply want to get away from the nationalist war. We must demand their right to either go to Serbia, or return to their homes in Croatia in peace.

Milosevic will try to use Serbs from Krajina to bolster the Bos-

nian Serb Chetniks, whose demoralised regime is now split between Karadzic and General Mladic.

Besides Banja Luka, from which Muslims were ruthlessly expelled, he has the captured 'safe havens' in the east to garrison. His regime has already tried to settle Serbs in occupied Kosovo unsuccessfully. We must oppose any UN collusion in this game of moving people around like pawns against each other.

Despite gratitude for the Croat soldiers' bold victory, most Bosnians (and many Croats) remain distrustful of Croatia's President Tudjman.

There have been recurring rumours of a secret understanding between him and Milosevic, like that under which he encouraged Croat nationalists to stab Bosnia in the back two years ago. There have been suggestions that Milosevic was prepared to sacrifice the Krajina Serbs in the hope of retaining land seized from Croatia in the east, with some oil resources. Tudjman says he will not surrender any Croat soil, but what about Bosnia?

## Sketch

British Liberal leader Paddy Ashdown says he watched Tudjman sketch a map on the back of a menu during V-E day celebrations, although there are doubts on the significance of this.

It is the lines drawn by British and other imperialist statesmen on maps in Geneva that have proved more dangerous for Bosnia!

President Boris Yeltsin's invitation to Tudjman and Milosevic to meet in Moscow — pointedly ignoring Bosnia and Herzegovina's President Alija Izetbegovic — has been backed by the British government.

Behind nationalist gangsters like Karadzic and Milosevic, the biggest enemies of the Bosnian people (and ultimately of Croats and Serbs) are the great powers intent on carving up the Balkans; their only friends, the ordinary working people who must be awakened to their aid.

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# Chinese police silence sex-slave

POLICE in Beijing raided a press conference last week at which a woman was describing her ordeal as a so-called 'comfort woman', a sex-slave forced to serve Japanese troops during World War II.

Wang Aihua had begun crying as she spoke, when suddenly the lights went out and police rushed in, confiscating photographers' film and telling reporters to file

no stories. Wang and a fellow-victim were allowed to leave, but the organiser of the press conference, Li Dingguo, was taken away by police. The affair of the 'comfort women' has been raised in several Asian countries, with claims for compensation from Japan.

Although willing in the past to expose Japanese war atrocities, the Chinese Stalinist au-

thorities appear anxious now to stop citizens upsetting good relations with their largest capitalist trading partner and creditor.

Even though Japan's Foreign Ministry granted visas for four Chinese war victims and their families to bring cases last week, the Chinese authorities ordered Tong Zeng, who has been campaigning on such issues for some

years, to stay out of Beijing when Japanese leaders came.

Tong has also been ordered to keep away from the capital from 30 August to 15 September, when the United Nations World Conference on Women will be held there. There have been reports that the UN has also been handed a list of organisations that will not be welcome to attend.