

Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY SATURDAY 6 NOVEMBER 1993 NO. 382 PRICE 30p

SMASH UN BLOCKADE OF BOSNIA

OPEN the northern route to Tuzla!

This was the main call from a highly successful report-back meeting for the Workers Aid convoy to Bosnia, which was held in Manchester last Saturday.

A giant second convoy is now to be built to take aid to Tuzla, the working-class heart of Bosnia.

A 350-strong audience heard Edo Asceric, representing the Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb, Croatia, explain the situation in Bosnia, and why opening the route to Tuzla along the northern corridor is now the most urgent need of the people of the Tuzla region (see this page).

The convoy had not been able, on this occasion, to take its desperately needed aid to Bosnia because of deliberate obstruction by the United Nations, explained convoy member Dot Gibson, who is a member of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (see pages 4, 5 & 6).

A proposal for a more general campaign, which would have avoided a real struggle against the United Nations, was decisively rejected by the meeting.

Warm

The two representatives of the Tuzla centre who were present at Manchester have already started the campaign in Britain for the opening of the northern corridor.

On Tuesday they visited the Liverpool headquarters of the Transport and General Workers' Union, where they were given a warm reception. They met representatives of the lorry drivers who donated £200 to Tuzla and promised all possible help in the future.

Calum MacDonald MP arranged a meeting for Wednesday 3 November in the House of Commons, at which the Tuzla representatives were due to speak to a group of Labour MPs.

BY THE EDITOR

A meeting with the international department of the TUC was arranged for Thursday 4 November, and to attend was Ken Cameron of the Fire Brigades Union, one of the sponsors of Workers Aid for Bosnia.

The campaign to get the convoy to Tuzla brought forth a big response in the working class throughout Europe and beyond. That response must now be built on and extended.

The whole labour movement must be roused around this central issue: break the UN stranglehold on Bosnia, open up the northern route to Bosnia.

Bosnia: see editorial on page 2; Manchester meeting report on page 3; and reports on back page.

'We must join forces and get aid to Tuzla'

EDO ASCERIC, from the Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb, spoke of the reasons why the northern route to Tuzla must be opened, at last Saturday's Workers Aid meeting in Manchester.

I REGRET that the president of the coalminers' trades unions of Tuzla is not able to be with us today.

I expect that many of you know that it is not possible to get out of Tuzla without the help of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

Therefore I would like to extend the gratitude of myself and all the workers of Tuzla.

I hope that the people organising the convoy for the people of Tuzla and Bosnia will never be forgotten, and I hope that you will never be in the situation of having to ask for the same sort of help from us.

You have heard the other reports already — especially that of Dot Gibson (see pages 4, 5 & 6). You have heard of the help given to the convoy members by the Logistic Centre of

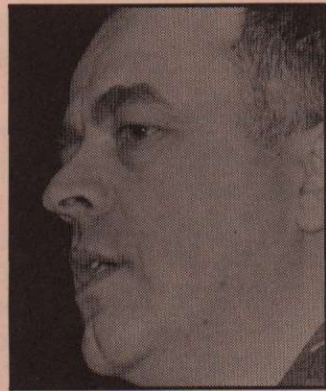
Tuzla in Zagreb: translations, office space, fax machines, interpreters and so on.

All the problems concerning the convoy have been explained in the main report, but I hope you will not give up and that next time the convoy will be much more successful and hopefully reach Tuzla.

As you know Tuzla is organised on a multi-ethnic basis as a multi-ethnic people.

At the moment aid can only reach Tuzla with the help of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and UNPROFOR.

We think that this has been done consciously because other convoys are not permitted to reach Tuzla, and we know that when there is no food then conflicts might break out among the different nationalities.



Edo Asceric Photo: Alan Clark

route, [which the first convoy attempted to take]?

We say: because it is necessary for Tuzla. Tuzla can be reached from Zagreb in only five hours. And the route via Split in the south, which is used by UNHCR and UNPROFOR and was suggested by them for the convoy, is about 1,200km long and takes about 36 hours to reach Tuzla — if the road is open. Also, as already mentioned in the main report, this route is very hazardous.

Focus

Dot Gibson was right to say that this convoy has not just a humanitarian mission: it has another mission — to attract international attention to focus on the opening of this route.

Finally, on behalf of my friends, workers from Tuzla and Bosnia, I would like to express my best wishes and regards to you all and I hope the next convoy will get to Tuzla.



Voting on resolutions at the Workers Aid report-back meeting last Saturday Photo: Anthony Myers

International Workers Aid convoy reports ...

Open the northern route to Tuzla!

Speakers from Tuzla and the convoy

Monday 8 November, 7.30pm

New Theatre

LSE, Houghton St, London WC2A 2AE
(nearest tube Holborn)

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CONVOY HOTLINE: 071-582 5462

TWO opposed political lines were revealed at the report-back meeting of the Workers Aid convoy to Bosnia held in Manchester last weekend.

■ The great majority of those present called upon European trades unions, workers, young people, and those who defend democratic rights to build an International Workers Aid convoy that will campaign to open the northern corridor to Tuzla.

The Workers Revolutionary Party supported this line, as did the significant number of Bosnians present, and the majority of the convoy team.

■ In opposition, the minority said that a European-wide campaign should be established that continues to organise humanitarian aid, that campaigns for the right of Bosnian self-determination, that campaigns for the right of Bosnian refugees to enter Britain and other countries freely, that works for educational projects among Bosnian refugees.

For this minority the opening of the northern corridor would be simply one aspect of such work, but not its central, directing goal. They accused the others of making Tuzla and the northern corridor a 'fetish'.

This minority was grouped around the International Socialist Group, supporters of the so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec).

* * * * *

OF COURSE the activities proposed by this minority must be supported. But to base a campaign on these issues in general would be to ignore the burning question: how is Tuzla to be relieved and a fighting unity established between the workers of Bosnia and the workers of the rest of Europe as a whole?

Those who opposed concentration on the opening of the northern corridor said that if we put all our eggs into one basket we risked 'disappointing' people, should we fail in our aim.

Here is the politics of the middle class at work. The blunt fact is that

First lessons from the convoy report

on this occasion the convoy could not reach Tuzla — because of the opposition of the UN.

But the people of Tuzla have not gone away: they remain trapped, and as winter arrives they are faced with death by starvation and the murderous activity of the Serbian fascist bands.

What do members of USec propose to do about this? Despite a lot of words, in effect nothing. They propose to turn away from this situation, abandon the fight against the UN and declare a programme which could have been drafted before the convoy was launched.

* * * * *

WHEN such people warn about the dangers of disappointment they speak for themselves, not for the working class. Right from the outset these same people told us that we should not even launch a convoy.

Instead, we should simply collect aid and give it to one of the various charities that was taking aid to Bosnia. In other words, we should run a liberal campaign.

The convoy was not a 'viable project', they intoned. We would never get a truck on the road, they said, shaking their heads. And worst of all: if we asked people to donate money and aid for a convoy and it didn't materialise, then there would be much 'disappointment'.

We took the opposite line. It was a member in Serbia of the Workers International — of which the WRP is the British section — who proposed that a workers' convoy be organised. From the start we led the fight to raise the issue in the working class. We were confident that it was from the working class that we

would get the material and human resources to launch and sustain the convoy. We were proved right.

Here is the difference between those who seek to base their activities on the working class and those who long ago lost all confidence in its revolutionary capacity.

Representatives of this latter trend enter a fight only on the basis of a promissory note of victory! Their best plan would be to set up an insurance company to cater for all their fellow lost souls who fear that disappointments may lie ahead.

Every member of the convoy team and all those workers who took part in the campaign are naturally disappointed that the convoy did not reach Tuzla. But the challenge for all of us is to answer two questions: why did it not reach Tuzla? And what must now be done?

The International Workers Aid convoy proved in practice that the UN is the principal force working for the dismemberment of Bosnia.

The convoy established that the United Nations opposes the northern route precisely because it is the most direct one to Tuzla — the region that remains the one bulwark against Greater-Serbian nationalism's 'ethnic cleansing'.

* * * * *

WORKERS Aid not only exposed this reason for the UN's opposition. But by stating its aim boldly and clearly — to take a step forward in re-uniting the working class of Bosnia with that of Europe as a whole — it brought the wrath of the UN down on its head. That is why UNPROFOR (the UN Protection Force) withdrew all assistance from the convoy.

Certain actions of a minority on the convoy are of the greatest significance. This minority, which included members of the USec, against the decision of the convoy team decided to accept the diktat of the UN. They removed the Workers Aid logo from one of the trucks and set out for Tuzla on terms determined entirely by the UN.

This was after the UN had earlier refused any collaboration with Workers Aid on any possible route

On this basis they had no difficulty in obtaining the collaboration of the United Nations.

* * * * *

IN PROCEEDING in such a manner this minority capitulated to the UN and broke with the purposes of Workers Aid, just as those who now refuse to put the fight to open the northern corridor to Tuzla at the centre of their work also turn away from a fight against the United Nations.

Thousands of workers supported the convoy precisely because it was a workers' convoy and not simply an 'aid' convoy.

Last Saturday's decision in Manchester recognises, as do the working people of Tuzla, that it is a matter of life and death for Bosnia that the international working class acts to lift the blockade and open the 75km-route to Tuzla from Orasje on the border with Croatia.

The opening up of this northern route is the key to the Bosnian situation.

Now we must draw in all the support that put this first convoy on the road. We must demand of those Labour and trade union leaders who have not yet spoken out in defence of Bosnia that they immediately lend all possible weight to the fight to open up this route to Tuzla.

We must set out boldly to mobilise a force in the international working-class movement of such strength that it will not be possible to stop the next Workers Aid convoy from realising its aim: to open up the road to Tuzla.

WORKERS PRESS £3,000 MONTHLY FIGHTING FUND

October fund closes: £2,474.36 'OPEN northern route to Tuzla' demanded last week's front page — and that was the line carried at last Saturday's report-back meeting of Workers Aid for Bosnia, which is the centre of the reports and editorial in this week's paper.

This is the only road on which the campaign can be focused to DO something for the people of Bosnia. The alternative offered at the meeting was to turn back and concentrate on propaganda work. This was resoundingly rejected.

The role of the Workers Press is therefore not just propaganda — it

is the organisational centre around which this work must focus.

But to do this needs money. We were pleased when TK gave a very generous £200 which helped to keep us just about afloat. But we only progressed by about £400 in total. We must do better than this.

We need a response from the working class — that means YOU. Even if you can't give money you can find other ways to raise the necessary money.

Mike Cooke

Send donations to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Coming soon

Friday 12 November: Irish night for Workers Aid for Bosnia, 8pm till 1am in Kennedy Rooms, Camden Irish Centre, Murray St, London NW1
Saturday 27 November: John Maclean 75th anniversary meeting, organised by the English Republican Forum, Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X (near King's Cross).

Letters

More letters — page 7

WE WELCOME LETTERS SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS, PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB — OR PHONE 071-582 8882

Gypsy Rose Myers looks at this week's Workers Press!

THIS week's Workers Press contains much coverage of the Manchester conference of Workers Aid for Bosnia and you will no doubt find space to cover the International Workers Aid meeting the following day of all international delegates.

On Sunday last week, with two votes per country agreed, International Workers Aid was formally established by almost every country at Saturday's event.

A significant minority of the Workers Aid for Bosnia conference last Saturday liberally agreed that both British votes could go to members of the majority positions at conference, of which two WRP members, Dot Gibson and Cliff Slaughter duly obliged and voted.

Cliff Slaughter put a motion

reflecting the main motion of Saturday that all energies are focused on a gigantic convoy to 'Open the Posavina Pass' — which I think is a stupid fetish!

This was defeated. Cliff and Dot for Britain voted for. Every other Workers Aid delegate there from every other country was against. The WRP then walked out of the International Workers Aid meeting. Your member from Hungary had already walked out.

On Saturday just before the voting I deliberately accused the WRP of 'reflecting Healyism' in your approach to basic workers' democracy and the united front. I 100 per cent stand by this statement! Your organisation has not yet learnt to work with others in the labour movement.

It is my belief that your reports of last weekend will be both wrong and extremely one-sided. As an elected co-ordinator of International Workers Aid, and as International Co-

ordinator of the international convoy to Bosnia: will you let me have full right to reply to your reports in the following week's issue (half to one page)?

Steve Myers
London SE15

Anti-fascist unity in action

PETER FRYER usually talks a lot of sense and his comments on the anti-fascist movement are no exception ('Personal column', 23 October). Unity in action is important.

Impressive as the Unity march on the BNP's bunker was, it would have been better if there were more trade union banners. More particularly, if John Monks had been there instead of avoiding the issue by joining a modest protest held elsewhere the police would not have attacked the march as they did.

Equally it is clear that socialists support the right of

those — black people, lesbians and gays and so on — who are attacked by the fascists to defend themselves against such attacks.

Where I may have a disagreement with Fryer is when he talks of forming workers' defence committees. This sounds uncomfortably like a desire to begin military-style confrontations with fascists. There is room for such confrontations provided they are — as when the National Front march at Lewisham in August 1977 was broken — within the context of mass mobilisations.

But the emphasis on anti-fascist work must be first on unity in action and secondly on mass participation. Focusing on small squads of 'hard' men and women to fight the Nazis is demobilising rather than a help to building the mass movement that is required.

I hope Peter Fryer agrees.

Keith Flett
London N17

On to next phase of workers' convoy

Last Saturday, Workers Aid for Bosnia held a report-back in Manchester of the experiences of its convoy and planned the next phase of the campaign to get to Tuzla. MIKE COOKE, BOB ARCHER and BRONWEN HANDYSIDE report on the discussion.

WORKERS AID FOR BOSNIA voted decisively to focus the next stage of its work on the fight to open the northern route into Tuzla — a far shorter one than that used by the United Nations which goes through Split in the south of Croatia.

The conference rejected proposals to nominally 'broaden' the campaign but in reality to defocus, dissipate and deflect its work.

The task of opening the northern route was the 'new thing' that had been found in the work of the first attempt to get aid through to the miners and people of Tuzla, said DOT GIBSON in her reply to the conference discussion.

The importance of this was emphasised by EDO ASCERIC of the Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb (see front page).

Speaking as a member of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, Gibson had opened the discussion by insisting that the opening of the northern corridor to Tuzla was now the central issue (see pages 4,5 and 6 for her full report).

Majority

More than 160 voted for her report, including all but one member of the convoy team and the great majority of the Bosnians present.

The minority, which won fewer than 80 votes, said: why focus on this question? Why not open Tuzla airport?

'Why not open all roads into Tuzla?', asked CATHERINE SAMARY of the French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

'What about women's questions?', asked STEVE MYERS, who presented his own report to the conference with his proposals for a 'broader' campaign. 'What about rape, ethnic cleansing?'

'You can't put all your eggs in one basket,' he said. Rather than one big convoy in February, Myers thought there should be a programme of 'rolling' or 'permanent' convoys.

MARIA ESTHER DEL ALCÁZAR from Spain supported the goal of opening the northern route:

'I salute the convoy by the European working class which gave us a chance to organise aid in Spain. I am a member of the Partido Socialista del Trabajo of the International Workers League (LIT).

'We have won support from trade union organisations. A list of 33 organisations sent protests to UNPROFOR and Bosnian foreign minister Granic.

'Committees have been established in Algeciras, Madrid and Barcelona. The committee in Algeciras is based on the important CO trade union organisation and the local Left Unity committee of the former Communist Party.

'The one in Barcelona is based on all the Trotskyist groups and many trade union organisations. The one in Madrid is based mainly on Bosnians.

'For the future I agree with the comrade from the Tuzla Logistic Centre.

second convoy but with the clear goal of opening the route and getting to Tuzla. The main obstacle is the UN. We must rouse the working class and put pressure on the UN to open the route. There is support for Bosnia in Spain.'

ALAN THORNETT, member of the International Socialist Group, thought that the value of the convoy was that it had 'kick-started the issue of support for Bosnia'. The implication was that we could now go on to the 'broader political campaign'.

Some accused the convoy of having dropped some of Workers Aid's demands in its struggle to get through — for example, 'UN troops out of the Balkans'.

Convoy member JOHN DAVIES explained how the campaign's demand of 'UN troops out' was expressed in the Workers Aid convoy blockade of the UN Protection Force HQ in Zagreb on 1 October (see Workers Press 9 October).

Davies held up a picture of blockade placards denouncing the role of the UN in starving out multi-ethnic Bosnia in order to carry out the UN-sponsored Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg planned carve-up of the country.

Leading member of the National Union of Mineworkers BILLY PYE stressed that the NUM was the only organisation to which he belonged. 'I support Dot Gibson's suggestion that the overall objective is the opening of the route to Tuzla,' he said.

'That raises political problems that cover all the questions that have been gone into. I don't think that there has been the suggestion that all the other

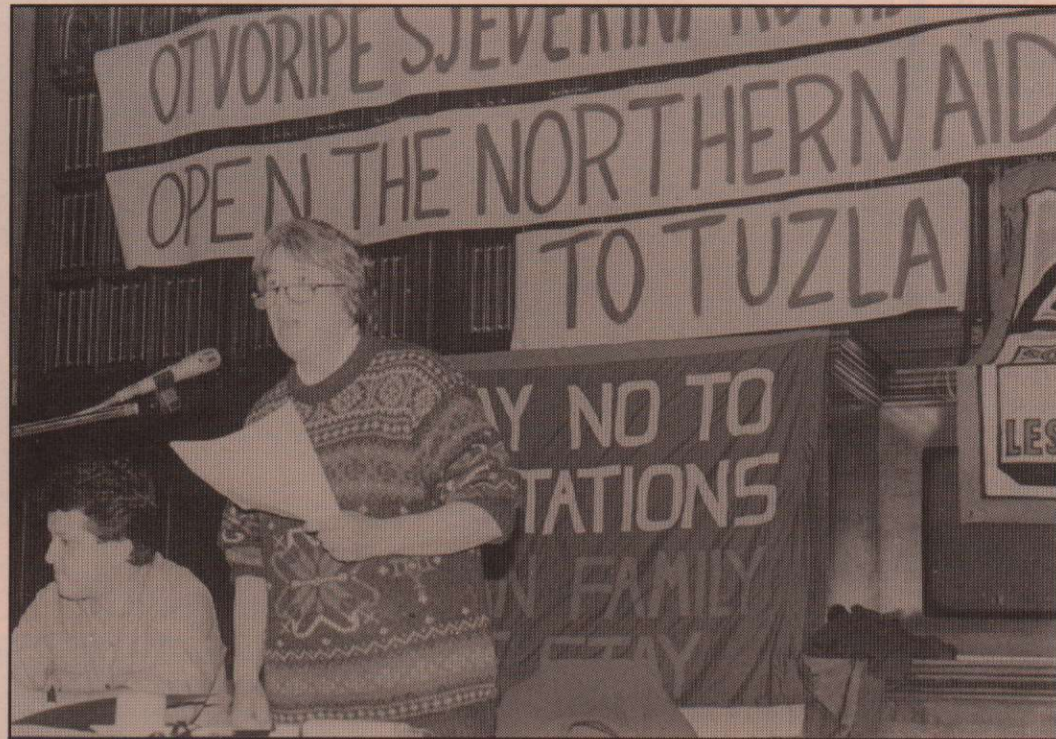


János Borovi (left) and Péter Pintér Photo: Anthony Myers

issues should be forgotten in the campaign to open the northern route.'

He explained why the camp set up to oppose the closure of Parkside pit had supported the convoy: 'It was not because we had made a big political step forward.

'It was put to us that a mining community, Tuzla, was fighting in a class way for its life. Opening up that route opens up a physical task cutting across labels by the use of direct



Dot Gibson presents the main report, with Vaughan Thomas (left) in the chair Photo: Alan Clark

In an unguarded moment, Alan Thornett said that the campaign had been a disaster because the London committee's authority had been challenged. His remark was met with considerable anger from those present who had worked so determinedly to make the convoy a success.

PÉTER PINTÉR of the Hungarian Socialist Party and a delegate of the organising committee of Workers Aid for Hungary said:

'I would like to thank Workers Aid for giving the opportunity to take a convoy from Hungary to Bosnia for the first time.

'Today it's Tuzla and Sarajevo but tomorrow it could be Budapest.

'Without a workers' struggle we won't be able to take on this

'For example, when we first raised the issue in the French trade union federation, the CGT, they said that they couldn't support any side in the conflict — not Serbia, not Croatia, not Bosnia.

'They had a neutral position. 'But when we put it to them: do you want to help Tuzla or not? Do you support the workers' committees there?'

'It was very difficult for them to avoid this question.

'We centred the campaign on Tuzla so we could go forward. We put complicated questions in a simple way that ordinary workers could understand.

'We had to unmask the role of the United Nations.

'People can't just shout: The UN are bad. That's true not only in Bosnia but for example in Somalia.

'How do we help ordinary British and Hungarian people to understand this role?'

'We can't campaign for a thousand roads to Tuzla. We can only clarify things in a fight, not in our heads. We have clarified that the problem is this road of 70km.

Clear

'This is a campaign not for "political people" — it is a campaign for the working class. We have to clear this road. We've taken the first step — we have to take the next.'

The organisational form for the campaign was a matter on which the meeting divided.

Leading International Socialist Group member PHIL HEARSE called for what he described as 'stable structures'.

'We must stabilise the campaign in Britain,' said Hearse. 'Up to now it has been structureless and anarchic. We can't leave it to a few experts.'

As Billy Pye said, to start discussing structures 'opens a whole can of worms and controversy.'

'The argument about structure is all about control,' Pye said. 'I've heard it all before with the miners' support network and it led to the débâcle of the conference in Sheffield.

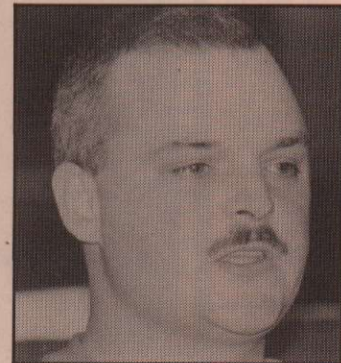
'We've achieved so much so far without a delegate structure. Let us go forward and do what we have to do to make sure that the northern route is

Steve Myers accused the WRP, of which he had been once a member, of still having the organisational methods of Gerry Healy, its late leader who was expelled in 1985.

Myers preferred 'consensus', to the 'simple-minded' concentration on Tuzla.

The meeting decided to form a steering committee of 'all those who want to take a lead in this work'.

This proposal, part of Dot Gibson's report, was accepted and the minority, which wanted



Billy Pye

a much more formal structure, was defeated.

Talking of the work of the convoy and the problem of reaching Tuzla, BOB MYERS said: 'We faced problems from the start. But we solved them by turning out to more and more people. We now have to go the working class and say: smash open this gate that stopped you, there is unfinished business.

'You want the campaign to broaden out? Tomorrow we have a meeting between the Tuzla centre representatives and Manchester city council, Liverpool city council and

Transport and General Workers' Union region 6.

Convoy member JACKIE VANCE said: 'It is important that the meeting understands that the job can only be done in the light of the experience the convoy went through. It was a fighting convoy.'

'When we left Britain and went to mainland Europe this fight went on among convoy members. A number of people insisted the convoy logo should be removed from the trucks.

'[Steve Myers] was worried about fascism in Croatia. We won the vote on the basis of what had to be done. The response from Croatian workers was immense.

'We are not just talking about building another solidarity movement but linking up with workers. Open up the shortest route!'

'We need a massive campaign now for the biggest possible convoy. Mobilise the working class in such a way it will transform the situation.'

Chair of the meeting, VAUGHAN THOMAS, a London busworker who went on the convoy sponsored by the London busworkers' committee, described his experiences:

'I joined the Workers Aid convoy in Slovenia for the last leg of its journey because it was apparent to me that it was a crucial campaign for the working class.

'It had a definite political intention — against imperialist action, for a multi-ethnic Bosnia free from fascist oppression.

'It was calling on workers to put aside their national interests in the interest of the international working class.

'At all times the convoy was completely upfront with its politics. It refused to remove the Workers Aid logo from the trucks when it travelled into Croatia, despite the hysteria of false warnings that there were fascists everywhere in that country.

'The convoy got great support from the ordinary workers of Croatia. When one of the trucks fell into a ditch local people came out from their houses bringing coffee and offers of help.

'And one of the greatest gains of the convoy came when the biggest trade union federation in Croatia opened their office for our use and passed a resolution in support of the convoy's aims.

'Despite not reaching our goal of Tuzla, the convoy was not a failure. It started with a small group of people and ended with the support of many of the major unions of Europe.

'We have a responsibility to the workers of Tuzla. This conference should not be diverted from its primary task of organising the next convoy to Tuzla.'

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Inside left

Up the pole

A REPORT says schools are failing working-class pupils. The education secretary, 'Bible John' Patten, wants them to 'raise standards' by hoisting the Union Jack. Odd, considering shipowners who fund the Tory party hauled down the 'Red Duster' years ago.

People complain about hooligans wrapped in the Union Jack looting and attacking people abroad, but that was just what happened during the days of the British empire. For more up-to-date Tories, a 'multinational' (not multi-cultural) flag might combine emblems of the Sultan of Brunei, Asil Nadir's northern Cyprus, and a pound-sign rampant. Flown at half-mast when sterling fell, it could warn of patriotic City gents stumbling from wine bars, celebrating another 'killing'.

The born-again Communist Party's 'Weekly Worker' recently worked itself up claiming 'the green shades of Islam' fluttered over the Bosnian city of Tuzla. There's an 'Irish Night for Bosnia' in Camden Town next week, I'll ask them to play 'The Forty Shades of Green' especially for Stalinists.

Nowadays fascists parade with the Union Jack, but the British Communist Party took it on peace marches in the 1950s. I've been looking through 'Communist Review' from 1948, the year the Yugoslav CP was expelled from Stalin's Cominform, the Communist Information Bureau. Harry Pollitt's article 'Yugoslavia' in the August 1948 issue said little about it, merely assuring readers Comrade Stalin knew what he was doing.

Subsequent issues were no more enlightening. A November 1948 review of 'The Great Conspiracy Against Russia' said 'The secret connections between Trotsky's organisation and the Japanese and Hitler governments is (sic) exposed convincingly.' Soon Yugoslavia's leader Tito stood similarly accused, followed later by Cominform leaders who'd obediently raised their hands against him.

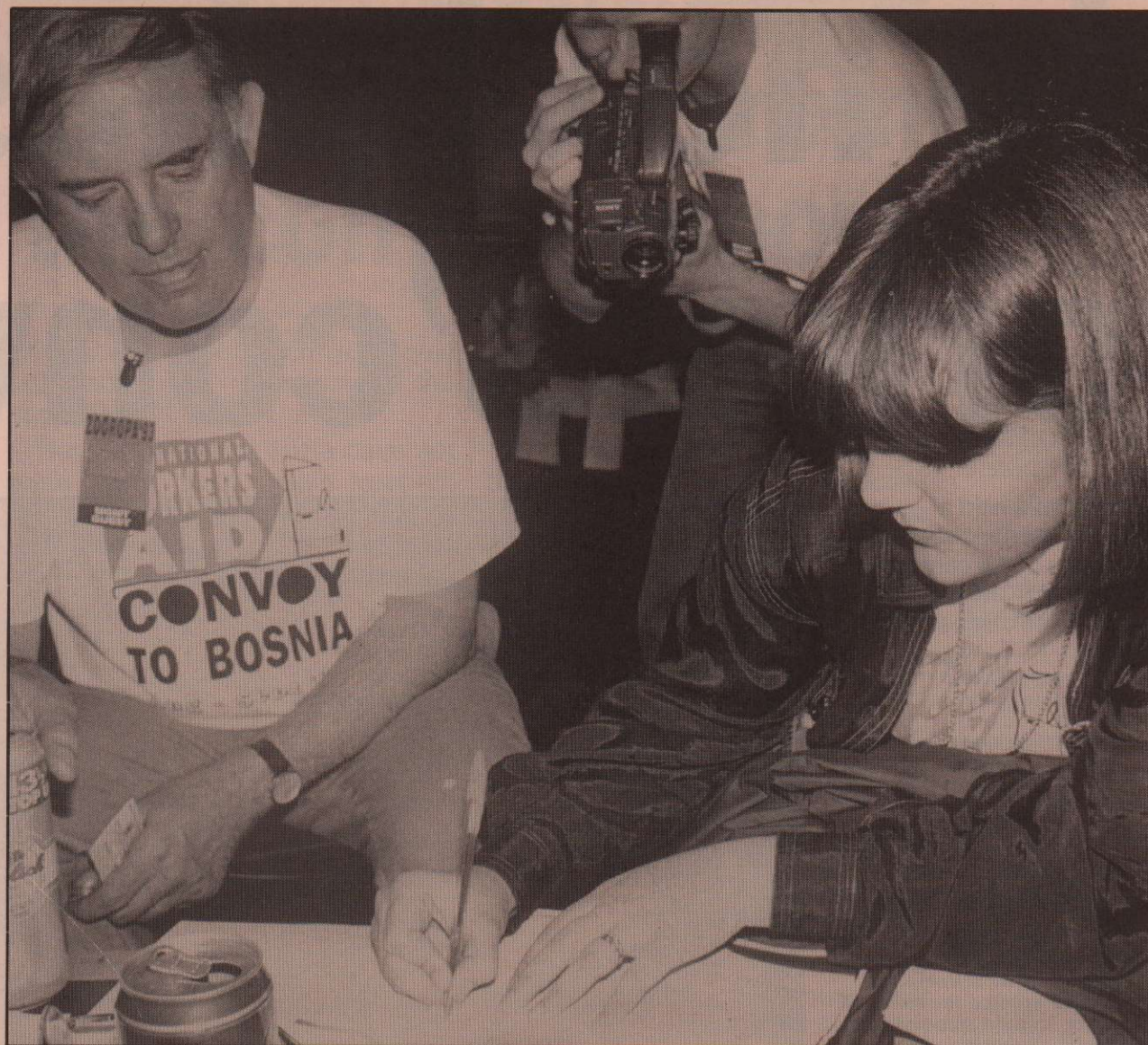
With subservience to Moscow came calls for *British patriotism*. America was the enemy. Historian Christopher Hill found parallels from the 17th century for 'The Fight for an Independent Foreign Policy' ('Communist Review', February 1948); Dona Torr quoted Russian ideologist A.A. Zhdanov defending 'national sovereignty' (March 1948); and William Rust accused reformist socialist parties of being the 'fifth column of American imperialism' (May 1948).

Defending the USSR by its own *reactionary* means, Stalin's bureaucracy, continuing trends from the 'Great Patriotic War' against Germany, adopted fierce nationalism, spearheaded by Zhdanov (until, perhaps because he was too prominent for Stalin's taste, he died suddenly). 'Cosmopolitanism' became a crime for which Jewish writers paid with their lives. Eastern European party leaders who, like Tito, had served in Spain, would be framed as 'Western agents'.

'A special task devolves on the fraternal Communist Parties of France, Italy, Great Britain and other countries,' Zhdanov told the Cominform's founding meeting in 1947. 'They must take up the standard in defence of the national independence and sovereignty of their countries' (quoted by James Klugmann, 'America's Plan for Britain', 'Communist Review', October 1948). Thus chauvinism's flag was planted in the mire of Stalinism.

The day my local hospital announced 'trust' status, some wit stuck a skull-and-crossbones flag on the chimney. I've heard Tuzla miners' banners remain red. So is the flag we will raise here over hospitals, factories and schools.

Charlie Pottins



Workers Aid campaigned at U2 concerts in Britain during the summer: Yasmin, a Bosnian, writes an appeal to Bono, U2's lead singer, in Leeds (top); and outside the concert in Cardiff (above)

Photos: Rex Dunn and Marg Nicol

Ope

The Workers Aid for Bosnia held its report-back meeting in Manchester last Saturday, members of the convoy team addressed the group's other members and supporters.

One such convoy member was GIBSON, a member of the International to Rebuild

A FULL report can only be made when we have had time to reflect on all aspects of the convoy. Today we can do no more than refer to the main features, the outcome, and the lessons.

I cannot possibly relay all the feelings, views and experiences of members of the convoy team, or of the thousands of others who took part. Some of this will no doubt come out in the discussion. Here I can only report on the main questions.

It was a member of the Workers International's executive committee, Radoslav Pavlovic, who proposed that a workers' convoy be organised to take aid to Tuzla in Bosnia.

He explained that this miners' town is multi-ethnic and anti-nationalist and said: 'Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a question of "Christian charity" but of workers' solidarity. The Bosnian people need material aid, but even more they need political and active solidarity.'

His proposal was accepted at the founding conference of Workers Aid for Bosnia on 6 June, and the basis of the campaign was agreed. This was:

1. The fight in the workers' movement for the right of Bosnia to self-determination and for the im-

'There is a basic world stake. It is the right of international working class power to assist its brothers in Bosnia'

mediate lifting of the United Nations' arms embargo to enable the Bosnians to defend themselves.

At the same time, to defend victims of ethnic cleansing and those facing political persecution by demanding rights of asylum and the provision of material assistance to the refugees, and taking direct action to stop threatened deportations.

2. To forge links with workers' and democratic rights' organisations in the former Yugoslavia against the support of the 'big powers' for right-wing nationalist, and even fascist, forces. To oppose the UN-sponsored Vance-Owen plan for the partition of Bosnia, and campaign for the withdrawal of UN troops.

Both in the preparation of the International Workers' Aid convoy and during its ten weeks on the road, these principles had to be clarified and defended every inch of the way. They had to be defended:

■ Against the apologists of the Stalinist-fascist-nationalist alliance of Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic and Vojislav Seselj, leader of the Radical Party;

■ Against those who act on the basis that the United Nations 'is contradictory' — in other words,

en northern route to Tuzla!

the Fourth International and of its British section, the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Gibson emphasised in her report the role of the United Nations, which stopped the convoy from reaching its destination, Tuzla, and which is heading a conspiracy to starve the Bosnian people into submission.

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that it has a good side;

■ Against those who equate the right of Bosnia to self-determination with the Greater-Serbian nationalism of Milosevic and Seselj;

■ Against all attempts to make the campaign into one purely of humanitarian aid.

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) opposed the convoy. It said we were 'well-meaning liberals' and accused us of taking an action which could mean the 'slaughter of dedicated comrades'.

These words were written in the same week that this news came in: 'The crisis in Tuzla, the main mining centre in east Bosnia, is especially acute. More than 400,000 refugees now desperately need food and most of the 750,000 population are destitute.'

It was estimated that 1.6 million people would need aid by the end of the year if they were not to starve to death.

But this news did not worry the CPGB. Just as their Communist Party predecessors denied the existence of Stalin's concentration camps, denied the murder of hundreds of thousands of sincere socialists and communists at the hands of Stalin's gangsters, so today the CPGB denies that the 'ethnic cleansing' — which is led by that former Stalinist Slobodan

working-class principle at
responsibility of the
g class to do all in its
others and sisters in
Bosnia.'

Milosevic — is taking place.

We replied: there is a basic working-class principle at stake. It is the responsibility of the international working class to do all in its power to assist its brothers and sisters in Bosnia.

Next there were those, like political writer Catherine Samaray, who said that they could not join the convoy if we insisted on calling for the withdrawal of United Nations troops. Her position served to shield the imperialists and confuse those workers who could not understand why the UN could not stop the slaughter.

We answered that the UN is in the region not to safeguard the people but to defend international diplomacy, which is deeply involved in the bloodshed. The Vance-Owen plan is a recognition of 'ethnic cleansing' — it means the imposition of ghettos.

One of the clearest spokespersons for those who told us that all sides in the war are equally to blame was the French minister of foreign affairs. He said: 'The Bosnian folk have hated each other and have been tearing each other to pieces for centuries. . . .'

The truth is that the imperialist powers are to blame for the war and the destabilisation of the Bal-

kans. This war was not started by 'the Bosnian folk'. The aim of Greater-Serbian nationalism — to unite all Serbs in the same state — means general barbarism, leading to the total destruction of all other nationalities.

There is hardly a family in Bosnia that is not multi-ethnic, made up of people with Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox backgrounds. What is to become of their children in this carve-up? But to the so-called 'peace-keeping' force, the balance of power takes precedence over human rights.

Fight for principles

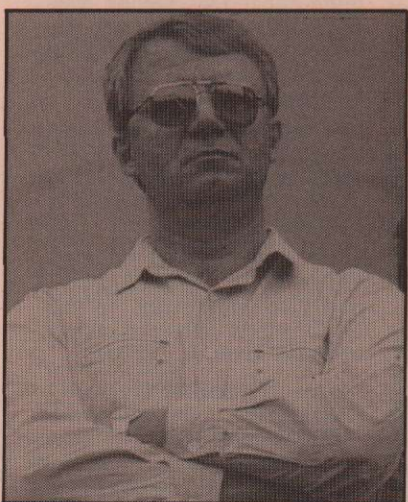
THE Workers Aid convoy could not but come into conflict with the UN forces, defenders of the Greater-Serbian nationalists. They are in the region to implement the Vance-Owen plan to strangle Bosnia.

Through this fight for principles we clarified our status as a convoy of workers' international solidarity.

When we demanded that UNPROFOR, the UN Protection Force, must answer our request for the protection of our workers' convoy, we did not go to General Cot on bended knees. We upheld the right and the necessity of all European workers to reach their brothers and sisters in besieged and starving Tuzla.

There were four distinct phases of the convoy:

■ First, the assembling of the necessary components — the



Serbian fascist Seselj

trucks, the aid, and the team.

■ Second, the journey through Britain.

■ Third, the journey through mainland Europe, a journey which itself was divided into several parts.

■ Fourth, the campaign in the former Yugoslavia.

Later in this report I will propose the new fifth phase — the campaign to open the 70-kilometre northern corridor from Orasje to Tuzla.

One of the most important features of every part of our work and journey is that, right from the beginning, international solidarity



Bosnian Muslims getting their water supply from a communal tap last winter: Muslims in Tuzla face starvation

was being built in practice.

Bosnians became involved from the start. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Information Centre in London supported us all the way, and Bosnian refugees in Britain became central to the campaign.

They took an active part, campaigning outside shops for the collection of aid, painting the trucks, joining the team in collecting money at the U2 concerts in Leeds, Cardiff and London. They helped us with translations, and spoke at public meetings and trade union meetings. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Fund of Britain bought its own truck to go on the convoy.

Early on in the campaign, Almir from Tuzla spoke at a miners' meeting and made a lasting impression on the campaign in the Manchester area. Afterwards, he wrote an appreciation of the Tuzla miners which was produced as a leaflet and circulated in tens of thousands of copies.

Our publications were sent to Tuzla; we received a letter from the Kreka miners; and we made contact with the Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb, Croatia.

In the final phase of the convoy's journey every facility was made available to us. We used the one telephone-cum-fax line and the Logistic Centre became the convoy headquarters. I take this opportunity to thank Edo for his patience and collaboration with everything we were doing, and also to include Indira, Azure, and Tommy (who took responsibility for the customs papers).

Special thanks are due to Faruk who, despite the dangers of drawing attention to his support for Workers Aid as a Bosnian living in Croatia, never failed to take us through a number of difficult interviews with the police and other authorities.

I could speak at length about each of the experiences to prepare the convoy: the collection of finance; the search for a mechanic to help in the purchase of the trucks; the gathering together of a team to paint them; the free parking facilities and warehouse; the nightmare of finding an insurance company; the packing and loading of the aid by the Tilbury dockers; Bob Mil-

ne's last-minute completion of the various forms for the customs when the convoy left the country with ten vehicles; and the problems of a team that had started out with 14 members and had grown to 35 when the convoy left Britain.

I have no time to speak of these things, but they certainly need to be studied in detail so that we do not make the same mistakes again.

Fight against racism and fascism

AN IMPORTANT experience was the support given to us by the Muslim Solidarity Campaign. Right at the beginning we contacted the campaign, following an 8,000-strong London demonstration in support of Bosnia.

We explained that our convoy was one of international workers' solidarity, and that it was our view that the working class, and not

of John Major and Douglas Hurd — and the Vance-Owen plan. So the sight of the trucks, proclaiming international workers' solidarity and packed with aid, gave workers confidence that they could act independently.

By the time the convoy held the Trafalgar Square march and rally on 5 September and demonstrated at the Trades Union Congress in Brighton the next day, it had won the support and respect of many workers' organisations: the national conference of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union; three areas of the National Union of Mineworkers; the Transport and General Workers' Union's London bus section; and many trades councils, local authorities and other organisations.

Also there were many experiences, like the send-off by the Timex workers in Dundee when the convoy started its journey on 9 August; and others which I only know

'The truth is that the imperialist powers are to blame for the war and the destabilisation of the Balkans. This war was not started by 'the Bosnian folk'. The aim of Greater-Serbian nationalism — to unite all Serbs in the same state — means general barbarism, leading to the total destruction of all other nationalities.'

Islam, must lead the fight against racism and fascism.

On this basis we knew that we could collaborate and work alongside and defend the thousands of Muslims who face racist violence every day. We kept the committee fully informed of our progress and our problems. Before the convoy left for mainland Europe the committee made a £5,000 donation.

What is clear is that this action has stirred something very deep inside the workers' movement. Day after day people have been hearing and seeing on their TV screens the terrible barbarism being inflicted on the Bosnian people, and they feel helpless.

They want to do something, but the trade union and Labour leadership supports the Tory government

at secondhand — like the Swan Hunter shipyard workers' response, the warmth of the people of Sheffield, the Asian workers' festival in Leeds, the tremendous days in Leicester, Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, Swansea and Cardiff amongst others.

In many places local committees of Workers Aid were set up and in each locality there were collections of finance and aid, the organisation of meetings, and arrangements for accommodation, food and receptions for the convoy team.

These committees have taken the form of the support groups which sprang up during the 1984-85 miners' strike and were brought to life again in September 1992 when

● TURN TO PAGE 6

Open northern route to Tuzla!

● FROM PAGE 5

the pit closures were announced and a mass movement erupted. But the Workers Aid committees are a stage beyond the support groups: they are internationalist and anti-fascist in content.

This anti-fascism was also the strong element at the heart of the convoy team. But the majority of the team were inexperienced in the workers' movement, and understood their anti-fascism in humanitarian, not class, terms.

They also started out considering that it was the humanitarian aid part of the convoy that was the most important and that politics got in the way. That is a measure of the extent to which working-class consciousness has been damaged by years of Stalinist domination.

The convoy made its way through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria Switzerland and Italy, joined by contingents with trucks from Denmark and Sweden, Hungary and Slovakia.

In most of these countries it was only at the end of August that committees began to function, but they found the same response as in Britain. There

build working-class internationalism.

This is not the case in Hungary, where the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International initiated the campaign and won the support of the miners and the Socialist Party, followed by support from the Slovakian miners.

In the former Yugoslavia the campaign is supported by trades unions in Slovenia and in Croatia.

In both countries the unions assisted by allowing the campaign to use their offices, held press conferences and supported the campaign of protest to the Croatian government and UNPROFOR.

I want to make special mention of Jasna Petrovic and Mario Uccellini of the Croatian union. They helped us to speak to representatives of the Croatian foreign ministry and to the Bosnia-Herzegovina government, where we discussed the opening of the aid routes.

We had the support of both for our convoy to go to Tuzla. Somenka Cek of the Croatian foreign ministry proposed that we go from Zagreb to Zupanja, in order to travel out of Croatia

were supported by Croatian people who have built a wall in memory of their dead relatives and friends, and who are accusing UNPROFOR of supporting 'ethnic cleansing' because the refugees are not being given protection or being allowed to return to their homes.

Trucks impounded

AFTER the blockade, we made our way to Zupanja. But after only 24 hours we were stopped by the police in Bjelovar. Our trucks were impounded and we were prevented from leaving.

We demanded to know under which law we were being detained. There was no answer. We were told they were waiting for a document from the Croatian foreign ministry.

We demanded free passage, and when this document had not arrived on the evening of the second day, we got in the trucks and sounded all the horns non-stop until they agreed that we could go.

However, when we arrived at the border in Zupanja the police stopped us again, showing us a document signed by the foreign secretary, Mr Granic, which showed that we were only to be allowed out of Croatia through Lipovice — into Serbia.

Again we demanded to know under which law they refused our exit to Orasje in Bosnia on the other side of the river Sava. Again there was no answer.

After we had spent two days and nights on the border in our trucks, the chief of police said that we could go across the river Sava, but we must all go and take all our trucks.

Although we had spoken by telephone to the mayor of Orasje and to the commander of the HVO (Croatian army) forces in the town, confirming arrangements made by Edo of the Tuzla Logistic Centre for accommodation and parking, and confirming the possibility of talking to the Bosnian Serbs on the front line, by now UNPROFOR had sent out a general message to all authorities in the region warning them against giving any help to the convoy.

So, although the Croatian authorities gave us permission to leave, they already knew that the Orasje authorities



Workers Aid campaigners preparing collecting buckets at U2's Cardiff concert Photo: Marg Nicol

'When we demanded that UNPROFOR must answer our request for the protection of our workers' convoy, we did not go to General Cot on bended knees. We upheld the right and the necessity of all European workers to reach their brothers and sisters in besieged and starving Tuzla.'

was no problem in raising finance and aid or in setting up committees to campaign for International Workers Aid. In all countries there has been a response from the trades unions.

This was clear when we asked organisations to fax letters of protest to General Cot and then to the Croatian foreign minister. These faxes came from many important trade union organisations, including the CGT of France, and in Britain from the TGWU and the president of the TUC.

Others will speak of the campaign in these countries, but I believe there are conceptual differences with the principles agreed at the founding conference of Workers Aid, particularly in Denmark and Sweden, where the emphasis is on humanitarian aid and not on the necessity to

and go to Tuzla through the northern corridor.

We had applied to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for help to travel on one of the aid routes to Tuzla, but they refused on the ground that our aims did not come within their mandate.

They then referred us to UNPROFOR, which passed us on to the civil department, which sent us back to the UNHCR. It was because we could get no reply to our requests, despite a campaign of protests from workers' organisations, that we blockaded the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb on 1 October.

We stayed there for 14 hours until a UN general agreed to take responsibility for the repair of our truck after one of his soldiers had put sand in the oil tank.

During all of that time we

would not let us into the town.

Therefore, on 17 October, the convoy team carried a resolution which stated: 'The International Workers Aid convoy cannot reach the workers of Tuzla on this occasion. It has been forced to turn back only 75km from the town by UNPROFOR and those who speak and act for the United Nations in the region.'

Some aid was distributed to refugees in Zagreb and the rest placed in warehouses for later distribution to Tuzla.

Despite this, our work had meant we had joined the Tuzla region's campaign for the opening of the northern corridor from Orasje to Tuzla.

This 75km highway is the perfect aid route for Tuzla and the surrounding villages. It is scheduled as a 'blue route' by the UNHCR, but nothing has been done to get it open and lift the blockade of Tuzla.

Meanwhile thousands of people are without food, have

electricity for only three hours each day, and have a water supply that is fast running out.

In these circumstances over a million people are in danger of starvation during this winter.

Spurious argument

WHAT about the argument that there is fighting on the northern route and therefore it is dangerous? This is a spurious argument.

Every route into Tuzla goes through a war zone. But whereas on this one there is a known 8-15km occupied by 3,500 Bosnian Serbs who can be contacted to negotiate a passage through, other routes are far more dangerous, having warring bands of starving and displaced local people who rob the aid trucks and kill or beat up the drivers.

Everything was done to stop the convoy and prevent it from meeting up with the Bosnian Serb forces to negotiate a passage.

We now know that there is a letter from these Bosnian Serbs to authorities in the Tuzla region saying that they intended to let us through.

But this northern corridor holds the key to the whole war. It marks the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The blockade and starvation of Tuzla is intended to bring the region to its knees in order to force through the Vance-Owen plan to strangle Bosnia.

Meanwhile the 1,000km route from the coastal city of Split, over a hazardous mountain road and through some of the most dangerous fighting in the whole region, is being used by the UNHCR as the main route to Tuzla.

Last week this route was closed when a Danish humanitarian aid worker was killed, and the HVO forces carried out a massacre in a village near Tuzla along that route.

Nevertheless, five team members have remained behind to try to get to Tuzla along that route. They have painted

out International Workers Aid for Bosnia on the side of the truck and told UNHCR and UNPROFOR that they are travelling, not as International Workers Aid, but as a charity: the Bosnia and Herzegovina Fund of Britain. The rest of the team has returned to attend this report-back meeting, and to carry forward the campaign.

Our convoy revealed the UN conspiracy to starve the people of Bosnia into submission, to force them to accept the Vance-Owen plan to strangle their country, and to create ghettos in line with 'ethnic cleansing'.

We therefore call upon European trades unions, workers, young people, and those

'This northern corridor holds the key to the whole war. It marks the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The blockade and starvation of Tuzla is intended to bring the region to its knees in order to force through the Vance-Owen plan to strangle Bosnia.'

who defend democratic rights to build an International Workers Aid convoy to Bosnia at the end of February.

We campaign to open the northern corridor to Tuzla.

To co-ordinate the work of the local International Workers Aid committees, a steering committee should be set up of all those who want to take a lead in this work. The first meeting should elect a chairperson, secretary and treasurer.

Experience shows that, together with the fund-raising and political campaigning of the local committees, the organisation of a convoy requires a core team of people to deal with the trucks, route, customs, and permits to travel and other formalities. We propose that members of the convoy team, who have built up experience on these matters, make up this core team.



These scenes of Bosnian Muslims are from last winter... the UN is heading the conspiracy to starve Tuzla

Television

A little light relief

Review by Jeff Jackson

stated by leader John Smith — illustrated one thing beyond question: whatever their gender, a bureaucrat is a bureaucrat and a political careerist is a political careerist.

But the interlude I referred to concerns the insertion of a previously prepared thumb-nail portrait of Mildred Gordon, the Labour MP for Bow and Poplar, in east London.

Filmed shopping at her busy local supermarket, Gordon stated with great humour that she didn't think she had the pull of Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley, for whom Marks & Spencer opens up specially. 'I don't think I want it, either', Gordon emphasised.

Shopping for buttermilk 'for her second husband — a Norwegian', the narration continued: 'her first husband was not the conventional choice of a Stepney girl, either' (sinister over-

tones start here). 'He was an American activist called Sam Gordon [three archive photographs follow, one of Sam and Mildred in bathing gear] secretary of the Fourth International, which some of our older viewers may remember supported a certain Mr Trotsky . . .'

All-male

Mildred Gordon was already drawing her pension when elected to parliament. Entering the almost exclusively all-male club of the Commons was something of a disorientating experience, she recalled.

'When I first went in . . . I found all these glazed doors which said "Members Only", and I didn't know if they were offices or toilets, or what they were. So I just sort of stood outside to see — or if they were bars. I waited to see if men

came out wiping their lips or doing up their flies!'

Last week Gordon came within a few votes of being elected onto Labour's shadow cabinet which, according to some cynics, Peter Allen claimed, was a plot by male chauvinist MPs to discredit the system which forces them to vote for four women.

Here, she insisted, the media had been really at fault. It had conducted a concerted campaign 'to make it look as though the majority of Labour MPs are stupid, cloth-capped, neanderthal, misogynists. Now that's not true at all,' she concluded loyally (at which point the interview came to an abrupt end).

The camera followed from behind as Gordon wheeled out her shopping trolley, the narration bidding a fond farewell with the words:

'This is a politician whose sympathies are more with Leon Trotsky than with Tony Blair. Who knows what the future holds for her in the party? A red rose flowering late, she shows no signs of withering.'

The sense of sex education

HERE in Britain, in 1993, one person in five has sex before the age of 16; seven female teenagers in 100 become pregnant; and a third of those pregnancies are unplanned.

Yet when the Family Planning Association publishes a book for primary schools suggesting that sex education should begin at the age of four, all hell is let loose.

Education secretary Union Jack Patten says the book arouses 'considerable anxiety' in his breast. Valerie Riches, of the Family Education Trust, deplores what she calls 'condom culture' in the classroom.

Others are distressed by the idea that four-year-olds should merely know the words 'nipple' and 'testicles'. Sexual knowledge, they cry, destroys childhood 'innocence' — a word which, in this context, merely means 'ignorance that we approve of'.

Where, oh where, have these protesters been living in the past 20 years or so? Thanks in large part to ignorance — and in large part to the way the sewer press reflects that ignorance and cooks it up into circulation-boosting salacious stories — our 'popular' culture is now fairly saturated with sex.

Watch, if you can bear it, a day's television advertisements.

Many, to be sure, are aimed at getting children to demand expensive toys or nutritionally worthless food. Many are aimed at getting women to buy one of several competing brands of washing powder, or of tampons.

Most of the rest are either downright titillating, or dedicated to the proposition that if you use this or that product you will immediately become sexually irresistible.

Watch, if you can bear it, a single Saturday evening's episode of 'Blind Date'. If the episode I saw the other week is anything to go by — and I have no reason to suppose it isn't — this show consists in a stream of the crudest sexual innuendoes.

A recent programme which gathered a group of black women to talk about their lives — a promising idea — was turned into a trivial discussion of their love lives and of the sexual performance of black men compared with that of white men.

Prudery is a neurotic retreat from life, but all this nudge-nudge wink-wink advertising and 'entertainment' is several degrees worse and more immature than prudery. It's an unhealthy obsession.

On TV and in the newspapers — and not only the sewer press; the 'Guardian' and 'Telegraph' are happy to ride on the same band-wagon — sex sells, sex entertains, sex embellishes. But it's always surrogate sex, never the real thing: that might shock some people and would certainly threaten their ignorance.

Now, does anyone seriously suppose that four-year-olds, as well as everyone else, are not exposed to this media obsession with sex, day in and day out?

Can anyone seriously claim there is no connection whatever between this daily cascade of muck over the past 20-odd years and the sad ignorance and tragic sexual mores, among some sections of young people, that came to light in the recent 'date rape' case?

Experience shows that the age to begin sex education isn't four, or 11, or 14, but when the child asks his or her first question on the subject. That and subsequent questions should be answered honestly, in a matter-of-fact way, and in terms the child can easily understand.

And somewhere along the way, when the appropriate questions are asked, the answers should of course include the moral precepts that explain why rape and 'date rape' — and their female equivalent: leading a man on

PERSONAL COLUMN

and then changing your mind — are alike abhorrent.

Doing justice to Kipling

I'M GRATEFUL to Brian Pearce for pointing out that in my piece on Colonel Blimp (16 October) I repeated the common misunderstanding of Rudyard Kipling's phrase 'lesser breeds without the Law' (and, though it's a less serious error, failed to capitalise the final word).

The phrase occurs in Kipling's poem 'Recessional', written in 1897 for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, and the context is:

*Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law.*

'This does not refer to Britain's colonial subjects,' writes Pearce, 'but to other imperialist powers, or some of them.'

'The point of the poem is — à la Blimp — to remind the British that power, as embodied in their Empire, should not go to their heads and make them forget that God is watching what they do with their power.'

'The British, seen as a sort of Chosen People, must show a good example to the world, not copy the caddish behaviour of Certain Other Peoples.'

Pearce goes on to suggest that I follow up the piece on Colonel Blimp with a detailed examination of Kipling's ideology. In 'Kim', 'Gunga Din', 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy' and elsewhere, he says, Kipling displayed a 'generosity of spirit where those peoples were concerned who would doubtless be called "niggers" and "wogs" by some who nowadays take his name in vain'.

Pearce then tells of an incident from when he was in India during World War II, and I think his story deserves a wider audience:

'One evening in some club I got into conversation with a young British officer who was obviously a recent arrival in the country.'

'He had brought some prejudices with him, as I discovered when he made a contemptuous remark about the "Anglo-Indians", as they were officially called, who ran the railways. He used the disparaging expression "chi-chis".'

'Having noticed the yellow facings on his jacket, I said: "They've put you in Skinner's Horse, I see." "Yes", he replied. I rejoined: "Skinner was what you call a chi-chi." "Good Lord, was he?" said my young acquaintance, and became thoughtful. Soon after this he moved to another table.'

'An elderly regular officer who was sitting nearby and had evidently overheard our conversation then remarked to me, sadly: "It seems they don't teach them any regimental history these days."'

For any Workers Press readers who might likewise be a bit shaky on military history, I should add that James Skinner (1778-1841) joined the Indian army at 15 and was promoted to lieutenant for gallantry, but was dismissed by the French adventurer General Perron on account of his part-Asian origins.

Under General Lord Lake he formed Skinner's Horse, one of British-ruled India's most famous regiments. His rank of lieutenant-colonel was not recognised until 1827, when he was also made a Companion of the Bath.

Peter Fryer

Programme guide



Conflicts between the peoples of Papua New Guinea and RTZ are highlighted in 'Hell in the Pacific' (C4, Thursday)

Saturday 6 November THE GREAT DEPRESSION: 'A Job at Ford's'. First in a series which looks at one of the turning-points in the history of the US — the effects of the 1929 Wall Street Crash (7.20pm, BBC2).

Sunday 7 November HIGH INTEREST: 'City Under Siege'. The City of London's vulnerability to terrorist attacks may damage its viability as a leading financial centre (5.15pm, Channel 4). THE MONEY PROGRAMME. Insider-dealing legislation was introduced in Britain in 1985 yet the practice remains widespread (7pm, BBC2). 'Bloody Foreigners: Racism and the Right in Europe'. Is the rise of racist violence across Europe part of a much broader and more disturbing picture? (9pm, Channel 4).

Monday 8 November PANORAMA: 'Water — Profits and Poverty'. A report on the consequences of the advent of water meters (9.30pm, BBC1). THE LATE SHOW. Special

programme devoted to the career of jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela, who recently returned to his native South Africa after 30 years in exile (11.15pm, BBC2).

Tuesday 9 November ASSIGNMENT: 'A Short Break in the Interference'. Television presentation in South Africa is changing dramatically now that apartheid is officially over. But what of the future? (7.45pm, BBC2). OMNIBUS: 'A Russian Strip Tease'. Explores the impact of the new freedoms in art and life in the former Soviet Union (10.25pm, BBC1).

Wednesday 10 November TIMEWATCH: 'Children of the Third Reich'. The history of Nazi Germany is re-examined through the eyes of a new generation (8pm, BBC2).

Thursday 11 November CRITICAL EYE: 'Hell in the Pacific'. Focuses on the largely unreported conflicts between the indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea and RTZ, the world's largest mining company (9pm, Channel 4). BLOOD

AND BELONGING: 'The Road to Nowhere'. Start of a series which explores the new nationalism in the former Yugoslavia (9.30pm, BBC2).

Friday 12 November PUBLIC EYE: 'The Health Business — Public Service, Private Profit'. The concluding part of this investigation reports on those who have made huge profits out of the changes to the NHS (8pm, BBC2).

Selected films

A SHORT FILM ABOUT KILLING (1987). Krzysztof Kieslowski's powerful indictment of capital punishment (Monday, 12.15am, BBC2). 20,000 YEARS IN SING SING (1932). Michael Curtiz's classic prison drama with Spencer Tracey as hoodlum deserted by his political friends. With Bette Davis (Wednesday, 2pm, Channel 4). YAABA (1989). An old woman is shunned by everyone in her village except two children. Directed by Idrissa Quadraogo (Wednesday, 12.15am, BBC2). JJ

Letters

More letters — page 2

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A flawed explanation

YOU invite discussion on the issues raised in the interview with Bill Hunter (23 October). Here are two points.

■ Hunter describes vividly how the 'objectivist' theory of Pablo led to attempts to liquidate the parties of the Fourth International.

The destructive attacks on the party by John Lawrence in Britain, which Hunter describes, were only one item on a long list.

There were the intrigues of Pablo against French Trotskyism. And in some countries, Pablo's advice to Trotskyists — to work in, or with, the Communist Parties — cost them their lives: for a start, Vietnam and China.

Could Workers Press follow up Hunter's account with material — less well-known to British readers — of the bloody cost of liquidationism elsewhere?

■ Hunter's attack on Pabloism is welcome, but his explanation of its roots is badly flawed.

The source of revisionism lay in a lack of confidence in the building of parties with Trotskyist principles, he says. And: 'Pablo's revisionism developed from the pressures on the revolutionary leadership in the face of the necessity of breaking into the working class to establish

lish an alternative to the seemingly enormous power held by the Stalinist bureaucracy.'

This does not get to the essence of the matter: that Pabloism, i.e. liquidationism, was the result of the attack by Stalinism upon revolutionary leadership.

By 'attack' I mean an attack which was both physical (the killing of Trotsky and so many of his comrades) and ideological (the sustained assault on Marxism, under the banner of 'Marxism-Leninism' (?) emanating from Moscow).

Pablo and Mandel capitulated before this ideological pressure. They turned their backs on the struggle to develop Marxist theory against Stalinist distortion and inversion of it.

Hunter says Pabloism resulted from 'a lack of confidence in the building of parties' and 'pressures . . . in the face of the necessity of breaking into the working class'. This is wrong in terms of history, and in terms of the lessons for today.

In terms of history, it ignores those countries in which the Stalinists had not succeeded in killing off the Trotskyists by the end of the war, and where the latter did build parties and did break into the working class.

This did not protect them from revisionism. On the contrary, revisionism in the international leadership was decisive in paving the way for the criminal missing of opportunities by the Trotskyists who led the working class in Bolivia, and for

the capitulation to reformism of another Trotskyist party that led the working class, in Sri Lanka.

As for today, it needs to be spelled out that the task for the Fourth International is not just to 'turn to the mass movement' as Hunter suggests, but to address those tasks by developing the theoretical basis of our movement, which we hung on to (only just) in the face of Stalinist pressure.

This is our only means of trying to ensure that we do not take the mass movement down the path taken in Sri Lanka or Bolivia.

Simon Pirani
London SE18

Selective history

I MUST say that I'm amazed at Attila Hoare's article 'Self-termination, national oppression and ex-Yugoslavia' (Workers Press, 9 October).

I never expected to see a resolution of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern mentioned favourably in a Trotskyist paper. That Congress, in 1924, saw the prostitution of international Communist policy to the requirements of Soviet foreign policy more overtly and crudely than ever before.

The rulers in Moscow having decided to take a pro-German

line, France was marked down as the main enemy and so France's allies in eastern Europe had to be 'de-stabilised'.

Hence the sudden enthusiasm for breaking up Yugoslavia, which resulted in a period of collaboration between the Yugoslav Communist Party and the Ustashe.

At the same time Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia was endorsed. Since Macedonia, as we have recently been reminded, includes territory in Greece as well as in Yugoslavia, this put the Greek Communists in an awkward position. Wasn't it as a result of the 'Macedonian affair' that Pouliopoulos broke away and became a Trotskyist?

Hoare's historical stuff is highly selective, as it has to be if he is to present a picture of Eternal Bosnia.

He doesn't mention King Alexander's *banovine*, when the whole country was split up into *départements*, as in France, which cut across the historical and linguistic boundaries and were named, as in France, after geographical features (Primorska, Drinska, Sarska, etc.).

Nor does he mention the *porazuni* ('Agreement') of 1939, when an Autonomous Province of Croatia was created which included chunks of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (This was just enough to anger the Serbs while not fulfilling all the aspirations of the Croats!)

Brian Pearce
New Barnet, Herts

Role of UN in Bosnia exposed

'WHY has the siege of Sarajevo not been raised? Why has Tuzla airport not been opened? The answer appears to be that the siege can only be raised by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) but it is in fact UNPROFOR which is enforcing the siege.'

This is the opening to a devastating attack on the role of the United Nations in the break-up of Bosnia, written by Adrian Hastings, professor of theology at Leeds university ('The force of impotence', 'Guardian', 2 November).

Writing specifically about the Workers Aid convoy to Tuzla, Hastings says:



Muslim women being 'rescued' by the United Nations from Srebrenica, eastern Bosnia, earlier this year

'In the last few weeks, the large workers' aid convoy to Tuzla, incorporating lorries from many countries, has failed

to get through to its destination. Not only was UNPROFOR consistently unhelpful, it is believed it actually gave instructions

that the convoy was not to be assisted in any way.'

Further, says Hastings in his article:

'The genocide of the Bosnian Muslim community has reached a very advanced stage. Probably at least a quarter of its total population is now dead or maimed.'

Heavy

'The UN has the full military capacity to end the slaughter when it will and at least stop all heavy shelling.'

Asking why one of the main tasks of UNPROFOR is to block all news coming out of Bosnia, a

policy in line with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd's appeal to the British press to write less about Bosnia, Hastings answers:

'There appears to be only two feasible explanations for this, both profoundly discreditable.

'One is that senior UNPROFOR officers in Bosnia are actually committed to ensuring a Serb victory and are systematically misleading the governments of the West.

'The other is that they have received instructions from UN authorities to go on squeezing Bosnia until it surrenders to Owen's Geneva settlement

terms, agreeing to validate ethnic cleansing and to sign away the unity of their country and legitimacy of their government in return for their lives.'

Open

In its own way, Hastings's article is a vindication of the entire experience of the Workers Aid convoy.

In particular, it is a vindication of the decision of the report-back meeting in Manchester to concentrate on a struggle against the United Nations to open the northern corridor route to Tuzla.

'End this shameful partition'

BY BOZENA LANGLEY

POLISH Trotskyists have given their full support to Workers Aid for Bosnia.

The support comes in the latest issue of the paper 'Dalej', published by the Revolutionary Left Current, supporters of the Fourth International in Poland.

They criticise actions by European politicians — in Poland and elsewhere — in giving 'humanitarian aid' to Bosnia that is merely 'a smokescreen for these parties and governments that support the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims, making them defenceless

against Serbian aggression, and agreeing to a shameful partition of the country, imposed by the great imperialist powers'.

Tribute

'Dalej' pays tribute to the British working class for taking up the initiative of organising Workers Aid for Bosnia — 'a campaign which throws light on the hypocritical attitudes of the Western governments while at the same time organising practical help for the people of Bosnia'.

It does not omit the tremendous involvement of the Timex strike committee in this campaign, as well as the London

busworkers and other volunteers on the convoy.

'Dalej' stresses the importance of the final destination of the convoy — the mining town of Tuzla — as 'the main centre of the Bosnian workers' movement, where Muslims, Serbs and Croats live in peace together. Where the Bosnian territorial self-defence comprises the representatives of the three nationalities. And where the workers declare themselves for a single, multinational, secular and democratic Bosnian state.'

Appealing

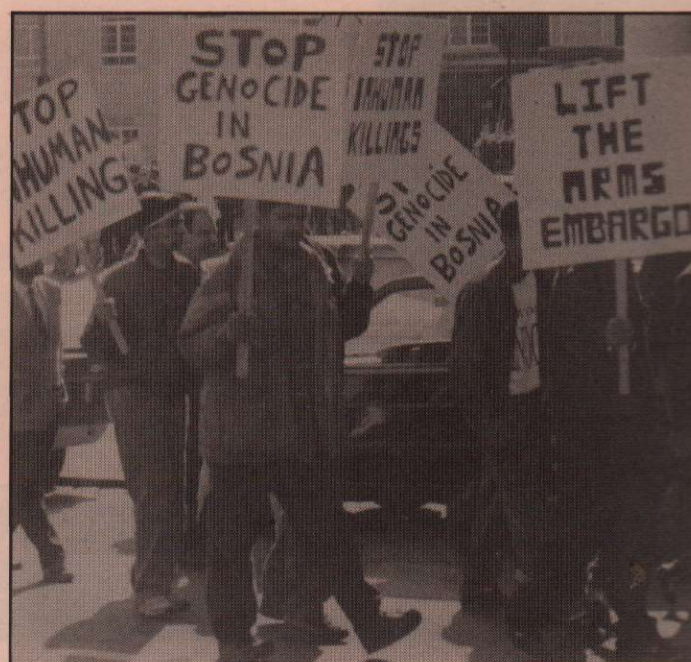
The article ends by saying that 'this is an example of internationalism and solidarity in the workers' movement. We are appealing for a similar initiative to be taken up in Poland.'

The article is followed by a statement on Bosnia from the Revolutionary Left Current, signed by the editorial board of 'Dalej':

'The Polish government, the whole Polish press and all the leading political parties are silent on the question of the atrocities committed in Bosnia, not only by Serbia but also by Croatia. The imperialist superpowers are cynically carrying out a partition of Bosnia, condemning the Muslim population to further cruelties, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

'We are appealing to all the organisations on the Polish left and the Polish workers' movement to demonstrate their opposition to the actions of the Western governments and to the subordinate and servile attitude exhibited by the Polish government to the West.

- 'We demand:
- An end to the ethnic partition of Bosnia.
- The lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims — they must have the possibility of self-defence!
- The opening of the borders for the refugees from Bosnia.'



Polish Trotskyists are calling for the arms embargo to be lifted, as are these London demonstrators earlier this year

PUBLIC MEETING
Yeltsin's dictatorship
What Russian workers have to say about it
Monday 15 November, 7pm
Friends Meeting House,
173-177 Euston Road, London NW1
 (opposite Euston station — use the garden entrance)
Speakers incl. a Russian worker and a Moscow student

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Ireland: 'Troops out — end repressive laws'

BY JOHN STEELE

THE cold-blooded slaying of seven people at the 'Rising Sun' public house in Greysteel, County Derry, last Saturday showed again the barbarity of the loyalist killer gangs in the north of Ireland.

After saying 'Trick or treat?' to customers two gunmen emptied a rifle and sub-machine gun into the packed bar.

This slaughter continued the pattern of premeditated killings of Catholics in their homes, places of work, bars, and betting shops.

Unionist politicians and the media have consistently attempted to portray the loyalist depravity as a reaction to IRA bombings and killings.

In reality, loyalist violence and the whipping-up of religious sectarian hatred has always been carried out independently of the actions of the IRA, and in line with the needs of imperialism.

The methods of the IRA represent the politics of des-

pair. They are the product of a political policy — Republicanism — which consciously turns away from mobilising the working class and attempts to hold its supporters to a belief that capitalism and its forms of rule will unite Ireland.

But the IRA actions — even the recent Shankill Road bomb aimed at the Ulster Defence Association headquarters that exploded prematurely killing ten people — cannot be equated with the slayings by the loyalist gangs, the UFF and UVF.

Threat

Undoubtedly these organisations are under the influence of British agents, and their statement that all nationalists are 'legitimate targets' carries with it a threat to socialists and trade union activists.

There is a real fear in many areas of the six counties, particularly nationalist working-class areas.

On the backs of this fear the Tories are preparing to impose a new arrangement for ruling the north of Ireland. Their feedback from the talks between

John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Fein's president Gerry Adams will tell them that the Sinn Fein leadership is anxiously looking for a deal.

In return for a place at the conference table, Adams will work for an IRA ceasefire.

How can the working class intervene in the current situation? How can the killings be stopped from escalating into a full-scale bloodbath based on religious sectarianism?

Protest meetings against the killings were called by the northern committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. In line with the methods of the union bureaucrats, these were deliberately vague in their denunciations and contained to lunchtime demonstrations and prayers under the general heading of 'peace'.

But there is a real groundswell of feeling among workers that stronger action is needed. Following the IRA bomb on the Shankill Road, workers — mainly Protestant — marched from the shipyard, aircraft factory, and other engineering works.

Led by union officials, in-

cluding members of the Communist Party of Ireland, the anger was channelled into a prayer meeting and condemnation of 'the men of violence'.

Significantly, when two Catholic workers were murdered the following day at a council maintenance depot in west Belfast no similar protest took place.

Reactionary

To achieve such a demonstration a fight would have been necessary — with all the inherent personal danger — against the supporters of reactionary loyalist thinking.

But this fight must be started. Around the slogans of 'Troops out — end repressive legislation', there must be a consistent campaign to expose the role of imperialism and how it continues to use sections of the Protestant working class.

Inevitably such a campaign will raise the issue of the necessity of workers' defence militia, which will aim to unite Catholic and Protestant workers across the religious ghettos of Belfast.