

STRIKE WAVE HITS YELTSIN

STRIKES erupted across Russia last week, mainly by workers who have not received any wages since April or May.

Miners walked out on Monday (6 December) after talks between the Independent Miners Union and the government broke down.

The union's leaders, previously the most enthusiastic supporters of President Boris Yeltsin, said they didn't believe the promises to pay wages' arrears given by economics minister Yegor Gaidar.

As we went to press, 12 of the 13 pits at Vorkuta were on strike. So were four mines and three other factories in Norilsk, four mines in Chelyabinsk and various enterprises in Sverdlov and Pechora.

The Council of Workers Committees of Kuzbass, which on 29 November decided against supporting the stoppage, was meeting again on 7 December to reconsider the issue.

But the very front line of the workers' revolt was the gas-producing city of Nadym on the Arctic Circle in northern Siberia.

The town is in a state of semi-insurrection, with 25,000

workers at 72 enterprises on strike since 29 November.

Workers in Nadym are owed 93 billion roubles in back pay. The total debt owed by central government to the regional authorities is 500 billion roubles.

On 1 December, a delegation — including the head of Russia's gas company, Rem Vyakhirev, and deputy ministers with emergency powers — flew to Nadym for talks.

'The city where the sun appears for just four brief hours a day, was seething', reported

'Izvestia'. 'The motorcade [carrying Vyakhirev and his delegation] was stopped by a picket of thousands near the very first state automobile inspectorate post on the way from the airport.

'Shouts of "hit him!" were heard from the excited crowd.'

The delegation finally reached the Pobyeda (Victory) culture centre — 'after some adventures' — for talks with the town's strike committee.

'A rally had been underway outside the culture centre since last Monday, and Vyakhirev attempted unsuccessfully to calm it down', said 'Izvestia'.

Passions

'Incidentally, although passions in Nadym are inflamed, you will not meet any drunks. This is the second week that a dry law announced by the strike committee has been in force.

'Voluntary people's militia-men have placed a guard on all the city's vital installations.'

The gas workers' entry into

the struggle was the last thing Yeltsin needed.

The pipeline from Nadym carries 200 million cubic metres of gas every day to western Europe — more than Germany's entire consumption. The strike will do great damage to Russia's foreign currency earnings.

The gas workers' anger has been provoked because their industry has been catastrophically disrupted by the imposition of Western prices.

Gazprom, the state gas company, is now owed 2,000 million roubles, mostly from other Russian enterprises, reported 'Izvestia'.

Investment plans are in ruins. Tens of thousands of construction workers in Nadym, whose projects now face being abandoned, are afraid they will be made unemployed.

Worse still — if that's possible — is the fate awaiting retired gas workers and miners from the far north.

Traditionally, they work for about 20 years in the excruciat-

ing conditions of the far north, and then retire on their savings to more comfortable parts of Russia.

But inflation has wiped out their savings and many are already trapped in the far north. Now even wages have stopped coming.

Placards

No wonder the government delegation to Nadym faced placards saying: 'Gas is Russia's wealth — but we face an impoverished old age!'

On 1 December, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin phoned Nadym to promise that all wages' arrears would be paid in a month.

But Yuri Kazanin, chair of the strike committee, said that 'whatever papers the Moscow commission signs, the strike will not end'.

'Izvestia' reported that the workers' rally had decided to prevent the government delegation leaving and placed reinforced pickets on the road to the

airport. It added: 'The northerners will believe only a Russian presidential edict, plus a government decree either on the further development of the north or on the resettlement for the "continent" of workers no longer needed.'

The Russian government is in a state of increasing desperation over the workers' revolt.

Economics minister Oleg Soskovets said the budget deficit was being extended from 5,000 billion roubles to at least double that figure — partly to make good the debts of enterprises where strikes are threatened.

Yuri Shafranik, the fuel and power engineering minister, warned of 'a social explosion in the oil extraction regions far greater than the demonstrations by the gas workers and miners', if payments by consuming enterprises were not made to oil companies.

Doubled

Perhaps in an attempt to prevent workers in other industries joining the energy workers' actions, the monthly minimum wage was doubled last Monday from 7,740 roubles (£3.70) to 14,620 (£7). This will mainly benefit low-paid workers in schools, factories and hospitals.

A presidential spokesperson said the increase — six days before the elections — was 'purely accidental'!

Typically, deputy labour minister Yuri Shatirenko said the strikes were 'illegal'.

Stop press

MOSCOW police confiscated leaflets published by the Socialist Workers Union, the Russian section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, on the eve of this weekend's elections.

Two thousand leaflets, and the art work, were snatched from a print shop. Police have searched all print shops as part of the Yeltsin government's crack down on opposition.

We call on all working-class organisations to protest. Address letters to the Moscow Chief of Police and the Moscow Mayor, and send them to Workers Press — we will forward them.

■ The leaflets are to be printed elsewhere and will be given out at a demonstration called by the 'Democratic Opposition' in Moscow this weekend.

On other pages:

- Christmas convoy build-up — page 3
- Northern route to Tuzla — pages 4 & 5
- Barcelona gears up — page 8



Protesters against hospital closures show their placards before a demonstration in Greenwich — 'Protest shows anger at closures', page 3 Photo: Alan Clark

The universities and capitalist decay

JUST as students are reeling from last week's budget announcement that grants are to be cut by 10 per cent, the higher education system looks set to receive another blow — the charging of tuition fees from 1995.

Ministerial briefing documents leaked to the 'Guardian' show that Treasury minister Michael Portillo is demanding that in future students pay for their courses.

The majority of students will be plunged into even deeper debt. It is estimated that charging fees would leave the average student £7,000 in the red by the time they finish their studies. **Many will decide they simply can't afford it.**

The documents, compiled by senior civil servants after a meeting between Portillo and Education Secretary John Patten, quote Portillo enthusiastically: 'The participation rate should be decided by student response and market mechanism, which contributions to fees would create.'

The briefing continues: '[Portillo] thought that students going into higher education should be required to make a choice, incurring financial costs themselves on the basis of their judgement of likely benefits from higher education . . . graduate contributions to fees would be essential if the Government was to be "serious" about a more market orientated approach.'

* * * * *

PORTILLO slapped down a weak-kneed attempt by Education Secretary Patten to make charges for only the last year of study: '[Portillo] thought this would blur student response to the prospective costs/benefits of higher education. Many would select courses on the basis they would be free rather than particularly suited to their needs or abilities.'

To pay off the loans students will 'need' to follow their course with well-paid work. This will 'market orientate' them to what are called 'vocational' courses, which provide little more than training for a confined area of work.

Courses which educate the mind so that students can make discoveries at the forefront of human knowledge and experience — in such areas as science, literature, music, and history — will be forced to close.

Portillo's philistine reduction of education to a short-term cost/benefit exercise reflects a capitalist system in an advanced stage of decay.

There is no room for the preservation and development of institutions which strive to push forward human knowledge. For Portillo, universities, colleges, schools, must all be entered as profit or loss in his ledger. This is the worst form of English utilitarianism, which increasingly assumes an openly reactionary role.

* * * * *

THE establishment of universities in the Middle Ages that challenged the aristocracy and the church became part of the ideological war of the rising capitalist class against backward feudalism. With the bourgeois revolutions in Britain and France the position of universities as places of learning, research and discovery was established.

Now the capitalist class increasingly questions the continued purpose of these academic institutions. Anything that serves no immediate purpose will be destroyed.

To survive, the bourgeoisie is forced to destroy the cultural conquests of the past. But it is only on the basis of these very conquests that the working class will be able to lead the fight for socialism.

Fascist barbarism, so clearly seen in the attempts to 'ethnically cleanse' Bosnia, is the only future otherwise.

The fight to defend knowledge, and the striving after it, will be a vital component in the reconstruction of working-class consciousness of its historical role — the taking forward of human culture to socialism, where knowledge will be used for human purposes, not reduced to profit.

Letters

More letters
on page 7

WE WELCOME LETTERS
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Prison officers are part of state machine

MEMBERS of the Prison Officers' Association are not just 'workers'. By assuming they are, the Workers Press editorial of 27 November damages the working class where it hurts — by miseducating its revolutionary vanguard.

The editorial used the words 'worker' and 'labour movement' in the worst way, as formal abstractions empty of their real content.

The 'job' of POA members is the physical repression of the capitalist state's prisoners. They are 'workers' in a certain sense, but also a direct part of the machinery of state repression.

There are many workers whose jobs are connected, by chains of different lengths, to state repression. For example those at Brocks Fireworks who make plastic bullets. Or NALGO members who chase up poll tax non-payers, feeling uncomfortable, but without a union ready or able to organise collective resistance.

Grassing

There are people whose decision to do what the state wants is more conscious. For example, journalists who decided to publish close-up photos of people fighting the police at an anti-poll-tax demonstration, with captions inviting grassing.

Those journalists may come from working-class families. But by taking executive positions on witch-hunting newspapers, they separate themselves to a degree from the working class, to do a job which assists in state repression.

Some people become prison officers by taking a similar decision. Others do so out of backwardness, ignorance and desperation. But they are all soon forced to descend to the level of their colleagues. The chain linking them to the state is wound in completely: they are part of it.

They all take part in the beatings and frame-ups. In the north of Ireland, they all take part in the strip-searches and killings. (Prison officers have been killed by the IRA for mistreating prisoners, and such IRA actions were justified.)

I am not discussing here the POA's dispute with the home secretary over their right to strike (which is important mainly because it reflects changes in the capitalist state, but as a mobilising issue for the workers' movement is just below the bottom of my list). I am discussing the political leadership given by Workers Press.

Our editorial did not mention a relevant fact: that, when the High Court said 'Don't strike', the POA immediately obeyed. Its leaders talked about 'the right to strike' while ceding their members' decision about striking to a judge. At the time of writing, the leaders of the POA and Trades Union Congress are doing their best to reach a compromise with the Home Office.

Our editorial therefore addressed no immediate practical problem. There was no chance of readers in the workers' movement having to take rapid decisions one way or the other on the POA issue. I don't even see why — given the really difficult problems confronting Workers Press readers in the class struggle on which we do not manage to comment — we needed an editorial on the POA at all.

It could only have been any

use if it clarified our general attitude. In this, it failed.

As well as referring to prison officers as 'workers', our editorial equated racism among POA members with 'racism among workers'. This suggests a ridiculous equals sign between an unemployed ignoramus who turns to racism, and the same person dressed in uniform, recruited into the state machine itself. But unorganised racism is not the same as organised racism, whether organised by the prison service, the British National Party or both.

Renew

The editorial claims that the fight for trade unionism among 'such workers' (prison officers) is bound up with the overall fight to renew the unions — and so turns upside down that crucial political question.

It says 'to fight for trades unions that really represent the interests of their members [i.e. prison officers, S.P.] and of the working class in general is an integral aspect of the fight against racism'.

But this fight will start with the struggle to break trades unions from the state, and to align them with unorganised workers and the most oppressed sections of the working class, including black workers who are the targets of racism and lumpen white workers who will otherwise be recruitment fodder for the fascists. It will not start with abstractly-conceived 'support' for the POA.

Simon Pirani
WRP



Prison protest against 'screws' in 1976

The editor comments:

THE High Court's judgment against the Prison Officers' Association (POA) arises in a specific context. It is one in which the capitalist state has set out to smash all manifestations of independent trade unionism.

Increasingly, the ruling class is able to tolerate trades unions only to the extent that they tie the working class to the direct needs of the capitalist state.

We have a very concrete situation: the state has declared illegal any trade union activities among prison officers in a situation where the latter were threatening strike action. What attitude do we take to this situation?

Do we simply say: well these prison officers staff the state machine so we should oppose their right to organise? Or that the issue does not matter? This is obviously one way of dealing with what are real, living contradictions. But not the best way.

To put the matter another way: who gains if the state breaks up the POA? The working class or the state that wants

to destroy all effective trade unionism and all democratic rights?

My opinion is that only the state would gain and that the working class therefore has an interest in defending the right of prison officers to organise.

The issue is not whether prison officers are 'workers' in some pure and simple sense. The 'working class' is not something that can be defined according to the methods of bourgeois sociology: that is, by starting with a series of criteria and then looking to see whether a particular group of people meet our already-decided criteria.

Join

The working class is a force formed in struggle. It came into being against its 'opposite' the capitalist class and in so doing defined itself. Further, whether in time of social and political crisis groups of people actually join the working class, go over to its side, cannot be known in advance, certainly cannot be predicted on the basis of a set of formal definitions.

Thus, after the end of World War I, there were police strikes in Liverpool and London in which a significant proportion of these forces struck for higher wages. But they did so in a

period of acute social unrest when the very bourgeois order was potentially threatened.

Should the organised labour movement have said: these are not workers, they are merely people who staff the state machine? Or should they have appealed to the striking police to join the struggle of the working class? The question surely answers itself.

The working class cannot be understood on the basis of formal criteria. For instance, millions of people who do not produce surplus value, but on the contrary live off it, cannot, by virtue of that criterion alone, be excluded from the working class. I have in mind teachers, local government workers, etc. (I am not of course suggesting that the position of these groups is the same as that of those who staff prisons.)

Simon Pirani himself seems to sense such complexities when he says that prison officers are workers 'in a certain sense'.

Flourish

But what does Simon Pirani's qualification 'in a certain sense' amount to in practice, for what we do? For him, in effect, nothing; it is a literary flourish. Prison officers are people who staff the state machine. Full stop.

Workers Press £3,000 monthly fund

November fund closes
at £2,125.94

In for December
so far: £580.60

I'LL start with the good news — £850.56 rolled in for the paper in the last week. To make the £3,000 monthly fund we need about £100 a day or £700 a week. So we've gone beyond that by £150.56.

We particularly thank F.G. for his £100. This is what

we need to happen every week.

As I ruefully predicted last week, we didn't make the November fund, which closed at £2,125.94.

The December fund stands at £580.60. But last week's achievement was a real step forward.

It's coming up to Christmas and the New Year so I ask you to please get your money in now — before you spend it!

The Workers Aid for Bosnia's Christmas international convoy is powering up to set off during the week for Zagreb, the Croatian capital — and your intrepid fund writer will be part of it!

So give me a lift before I leave and keep up the good work.

Mike Cooke

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

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Build-up grows for Christmas convoy

Anti-fascist groups launch new platform

BY JOHN PETERS

A NEW anti-fascist and anti-racist initiative was launched at last Saturday's successful Fighting Fascism and Racism conference.

A new body, Labour and Trade Union Campaign Against Fascism and Racism, has the mandate to seek affiliations from trades councils and other bodies of the labour movement, and to campaign for the demonstration through east London on 19 March 1994.

Last Saturday's meeting, which was larger than the first meeting in July, was held at Congress House, London, and it attracted speakers from the TUC's south-east region, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF), region No 1 of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), Women United Against Racism, and representatives of the trade union delegation which recently went to Turkey and Kurdistan.

Because various publications had drawn attention to the meeting, it covered a wider area — from Southampton to Yorkshire — than the previous conference.

There were several attempts to derail the meeting. Initially there were claims that the room was double-booked (a meeting held by the Labour Party and the 'Morning Star' was being held elsewhere in the building).

Tedious

The relationship between the working class and the Labour Party became the subject of some very tedious debate between groups of delegates secretly representing 'alternative Trotskyisms' within the Labour Party, the National Union of Teachers, and elsewhere.

The low point of this debate came when a former editor of Workers Press was described as an anarchist for explaining that, although he would probably vote Labour at the council elections, he had no intention of joining the Labour Party, for reasons just outlined at length.

People were already beginning to leave, fed up with these exchanges, before the business of the meeting was over. However these tactics must be understood as inseparable from a rote learning of history, and the complete lack of a Marxist world outlook, or indeed any kind of world outlook, amongst some of the delegates.

The future of the organisation, lumbered as it is with an unlikely and unwieldy name, will be in the rebuilding of the international workers' movement. This will come from a fight for internationalism within the organisation.

Workers Aid secretary BOB MYERS reports on preparations for the Christmas convoy to Bosnia.

WORKERS AID's convoy team, particularly a group of young unemployed people, is working round the clock organising the Christmas convoy to Bosnia — raising money, preparing vehicles, collecting aid and making the necessary arrangements for the journey.

And preparations for the Christmas convoy were at the centre of the meeting of Workers Aid's national steering committee held in Manchester last weekend.

The 30 October report-back meeting from the first convoy charged the steering committee with launching a campaign to break the UN blockade of the important mining town of Tuzla, by opening the northern route to the town.

It was decided that preparation of the next convoy should be made in conjunction with a team drawn from those who went on the first convoy

Last weekend, representatives from London, Leicester, Manchester, Bolton, Birkenhead, Liverpool, London, Skelmersdale and Leeds, and from the Bosnian refugees living in Britain, heard my report about the increasingly desperate situation in Tuzla — while we were meeting Serbian aircraft bombed the town.

Panic

In implementing the 30 October resolution we must not substitute panic actions by a few people, but continuously turn out to the whole workers' movement, I argued.

This led to a discussion about the Christmas convoy. How did it fit into the overall campaign?

Some doubts about the possibility of the convoy reaching Tuzla were expressed. The campaign in the unions and political organisations in Europe, while growing rapidly, had not reached the point where delegations had gone to the UN to demand the northern route be opened.

Others replied that we could never know in advance at what point the campaign would force open the northern route. The Christmas convoy, like the first,

must aim to get to Tuzla.

The committee agreed that it must take responsibility for the growing number of campaigns in Europe which were joining the Christmas convoy and wanted to try to get to Tuzla.

A Spanish member of the European parliament had promised to move a resolution in parliament supporting the convoy.

It was agreed that the fight for the Christmas convoy was the essential next step in turning to the labour movement to organise its own convoy in February.

Negotiations

A team based in London would begin negotiations with the UN, Croatian authorities, etc., for the Christmas convoy.

A refugee from Tuzla gave a report on her international work. After an appeal from Tuzla she had been contacted by Tuzla refugees in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, and Slovenia. All wanted to collaborate with Workers Aid and help with the Christmas convoy.

Bosnian refugees in Germany had appealed for two lorries to be sent to pick up aid and the committee discussed how to get the necessary vehicles.

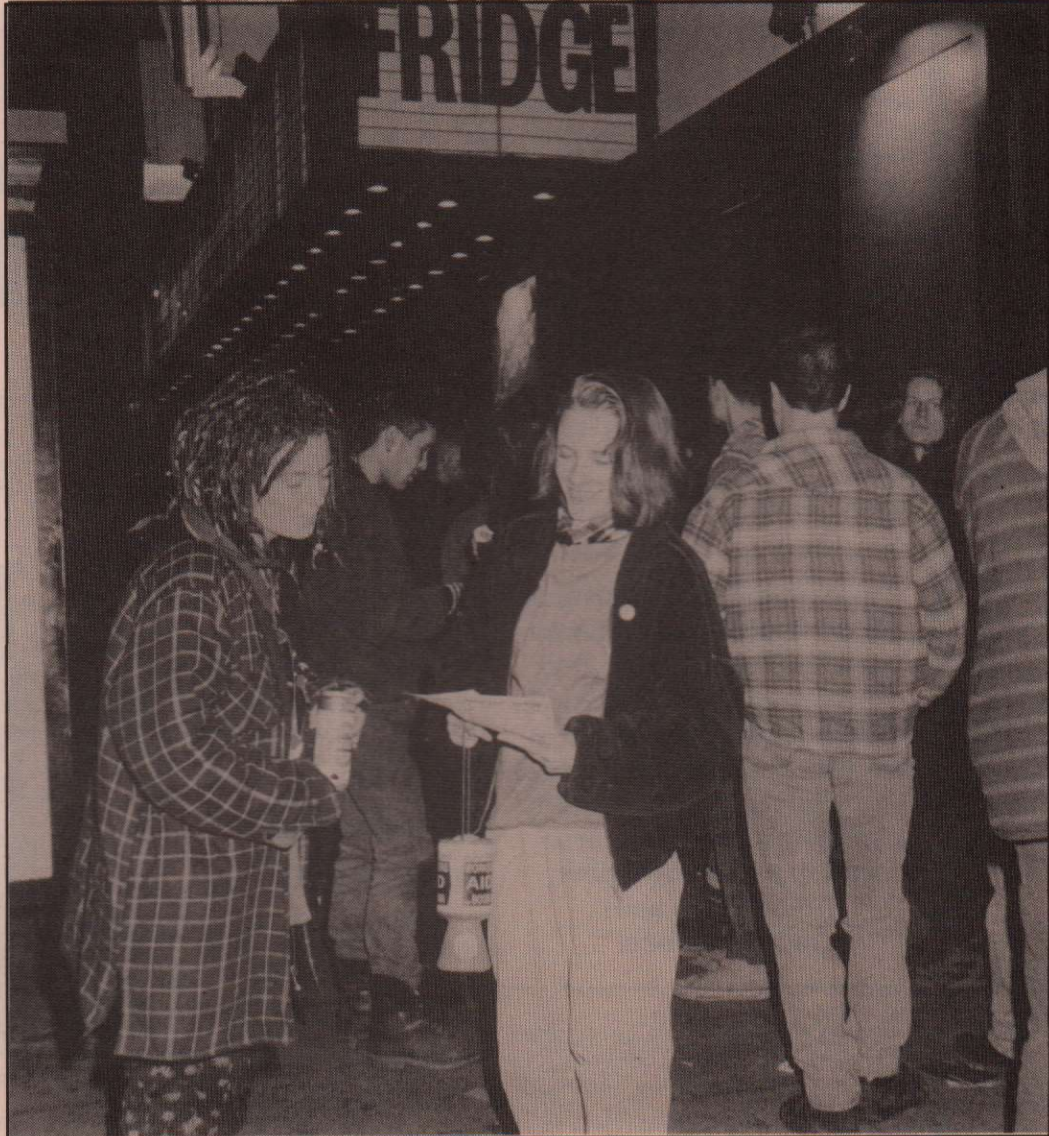
There were still debts from the last convoy which had been incurred after the UN forced the convoy to remain for two weeks in Croatia fighting to get through to Tuzla.

It was agreed that the financial situation would be reported to each meeting but that two accounts should be presented.

One will include activities up to 20 November, and another from after this date, when the first proper steering committee met and elected Vaughan Thomas, a London busworker, as treasurer.

The committee was confident that money could rapidly be raised. Successful street collections and other fund-raising activities were reported. Leeds representatives urged people to follow their example and negotiate with organisers of concerts and other events for collections to be held there.

Manchester representatives



Workers Aid for Bosnia campaigners were outside 'The Fridge' in Brixton, south London, last Monday and received encouraging support for the convoy
Photo: Maggie Nicol

reported that the city council had agreed, in principle, to organise city-wide collections.

But lorries and money for the convoy are urgently needed. It was agreed that everything must be done, including trying to borrow money, to buy the vehicles needed in Germany. These new international contacts must be brought into the centre of the campaign.

Birkenhead representatives reported that they were near to financial self-sufficiency. They were collecting aid to fill a lorry and raise the necessary cash to tax, service, and fuel their truck, as well as providing the drivers.

A Transport and General Workers' Union member from Skelmersdale, Lancashire, had heard about the campaign through his union and had immediately begun work for the February convoy. Local schools are collecting aid; employers are being asked for lorries; and other unions in the area are being urged to join in the work.

Meetings had been held with the TUC international department and contact made with the Scottish TUC.

Information about the activities of the campaign must be centralised through regular reports to the secretary.

The development of this

steering committee into a real working team able to centralise and co-ordinate work, but also able to take initiatives in each area, is critical if the working class is to come to the assistance of its brothers and sisters in Bosnia. The participation on the committee of Bosnian refugees and trades unionists is an important step forward.

Everyone wanting to join this international struggle for solidarity must make sure that their area is represented at the next committee meeting.

■ The steering committee's next meeting will be at 2pm on Saturday 15 January in Manchester town hall.

Protest shows anger at closures

BY ALAN CLARK

THREATENED closure of Greenwich district and Brook hospitals has caused fury amongst local people and hospital staff. They see the shutting of two major hospitals in the south-east London borough as an attack on jobs and health.

Demonstrators marched through Greenwich last Saturday in protest. A leaflet put out by the march organisers, 'Hands Off Greenwich NHS',

says that the Greenwich Health NHS Trust wants to close the Brook, losing cardiac and neuroscience specialities, and reduce Greenwich district to an out-patients service.

Transferred

All services, it is claimed, will be transferred to the 16-year-old Queen Elizabeth Military hospital (QEMH). This already has problems with the roof and subsidence on part of the site.

Therefore, the leaflet con-

tinues, it makes no sense to create new facilities such as an emergency and casualty centre and a Caesarean-birth theatre at QEMH.

The leaflet states that the borough has the highest number of people receiving regular health care for breathing problems, such as asthma, as well as the highest infant-mortality rate nationally. Now, it says, is not the time to be making cuts.

The organisers say that Saturday's demonstration will not be the end of the fight.

Tories reveal post-budget benefit cuts

MORE than 400,000 people will be hit by a £65 million cut in benefits that Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley hid from the Commons in his post-budget statement.

The Conservatives were clearly anxious to hide the true impact of last week's budget measures on

thousands of ordinary families.

The cuts, in housing and council-tax benefits, will hit claimants who have an adult living with them who is not part of the immediate family.

An older son or daughter living with parents will not be considered part of the 'immediate family'.

The changes, to come into operation next April, will mean that somebody considered a non-dependant with a gross income as low as £72 a week will trigger a £5 cut in the householder's benefit.

Those earning over £139 a week will trigger a £25 cut.

Nurses' jobs go as managers sprout

THE NUMBER of nurses working in all areas of the health service has dropped by 20,000 over the past three years, while the number of managers has shot up four-fold to 16,000.

In the London area, the number of nurses has dropped by 5,000 over this period, but the number of managers has more than trebled from 1,180 to 4,110.

Costs

Over the same period salary costs for managers have more than doubled, while the salaries for midwives and nurses is down by a quarter.

■ SPENDING on cars for managers of health service trusts went up by five times last year, the Department of Health has admitted. The cost of leasing cars to managers across the en-

tire health service now totals £70 million a year, compared with £12 million spent on X-rays.

Total spending on cars by health service trust managers came to £24 million last year, an increase from the 1991-92 figure of £5.3 million.

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Inside left

Listen to the Bosnians!

INSTEAD of shells and sniper-fire, amplified rock music echoed from the mountains around the besieged Bosnian city of Sarajevo the other weekend, as young people rallied to show defiance and *unity*.

For those listening in the surrounding Serb-held hills or hearing the concert on radio or television, the message came loud and clear — from the *Bosnian-Serb singer* leading former Yugoslavia's top rock band.

Ignorant and prejudiced people may be surprised it wasn't a muezzin calling the faithful to holy war. The so-called Communist Party of Great Britain has tried to paint all Bosnians as Muslim reactionaries. But 'Workers Power', too, although until recently it supported Workers Aid for Bosnia, hasn't understood the Bosnian message. Its December issue talks about 'the call for solidarity and aid for the Bosnian Muslims'.

Bosnians classified (regardless of religious belief, or lack of it) as 'Muslim' have suffered the worst ravages of 'ethnic cleansing'. We must also challenge Western anti-Muslim prejudice, which is a form of racism. But Workers Aid is about helping *all* those in Bosnia and ex-Yugoslavia resisting imperialist carve-up and ethnic cleansing. That's why its convoys aim for multi-ethnic, working-class Tuzla — the second convoy seeks to reach the town at Christmas.

'WORKERS Power' originally said it supported Workers Aid, but not the (first) convoy. Now it says it has decided to 'withdraw support' from Workers Aid, after its efforts to put the campaign 'on a sound organisational and political basis' were 'effectively sabotaged by the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP-Workers Press)'.

Apparently *too many* people came to the convoy report-back meeting in Manchester on 30 October! 'Workers Power' wanted a 'labour movement delegate conference'. Too bad if you were only a worker in the campaign, a member of the convoy team, or a Bosnian refugee!

Worse, 'delegates (*sic*) were greeted with a hall bedecked with a slogan no-one had discussed or approved in the campaign before — "UN must open the Northern Route to Tuzla!"' Yet 'Workers Power' uses a picture from 'Workers Press', with neither acknowledgement nor caption, showing the Workers Aid convoy team demonstrating at the UN headquarters in Zagreb for the northern route to be opened.

'Since the Convoy was stopped on the northern route to Tuzla in mid-October, the WRP (Workers Press) has decided to turn this demand into a mantra,' 'Workers Power' jibes. 'According to WRP member Bob Myers, the opening of the northern route was "the key to breaking the Vance-Owen plan".'

While reporting roughly what happened with the UN in Croatia — but *omitting* any mention of the support for the convoy from Hungarian, Slovak and Croatian workers — 'Workers Power' learns nothing from the experience.

Nor does it tell its readers that representatives from Tuzla stressed the importance of opening the northern route, and Bosnians supported this call in Manchester.

Bosnian participation in the Workers Aid campaign, and the Manchester meeting, isn't mentioned. After all, what could they possibly know better than the know-all of 'Workers Power'?

Charlie Pottins

Why has Workers Aid for Bosnia concentrated the next stage of its work on the opening of the northern route from Croatia to Tuzla? Why does it call on the trade union and labour movement of Europe to take part in a campaign to force open this route against the opposition of the United Nations? Workers Press here looks at these questions.

THE ACTIVITY of Workers Aid for Bosnia is now centred on the fight for the opening of the northern route from Croatia into central and eastern Bosnia. It is organising a Christmas convoy as part of the build-up of this campaign.

John Monks, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, has written to Douglas Hogg, the foreign office minister, calling for the northern route to be opened and many trades unions have not only taken up this demand, but are assisting the campaign financially and practically.

What is the northern route?

This is the 75km highway from Orasje to Tuzla. It is like any other dual-carriageway anywhere else in Europe — perfectly passable during all weathers. It is only 400km from Zagreb to Tuzla on that route, which is only a day's journey,

'The opening of the northern route would mean not only that aid could be got in to central and eastern Bosnia, but that goods produced in the Tuzla region could be got out. Thus it would assist the people in this war-torn country to rebuild their industries and independence.'

whereas the route now being used by United Nations aid convoys, via Split, is 1,200km long on bad roads and through mountainous country.

The northern route is a designated UN 'blue' route (an aid route), but it has never been opened. In the region around Orasje at one end of this route, and Tuzla at the other end, the HVO

(Croatian) forces and the Bosnia-Herzegovinan army work together; the main problem is that Bosnian Serb forces hold a stretch of the road between 5km and 10km long. But there is a negotiable front line at either end.

On the other hand, on the Split route the Bosnia-Herzegovinan and HVO forces are hostile to each other, and there is also fighting, not only instigated by the Serbians, but also by bands of hungry people who rob the convoys and beat-up or kill the drivers.

The opening of the northern route would mean not only that aid could be got in to central and eastern Bosnia, but that goods produced in the Tuzla region could be got out. Thus it would assist the people in this war-torn country to rebuild their industries and independence.

This would assist those in Bosnia who are standing firm against ethnic cleansing — for a multi-ethnic country. They are under great pressure this winter. As one member of the Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb said: 'When hunger comes in at the door, then love goes out of the window!'

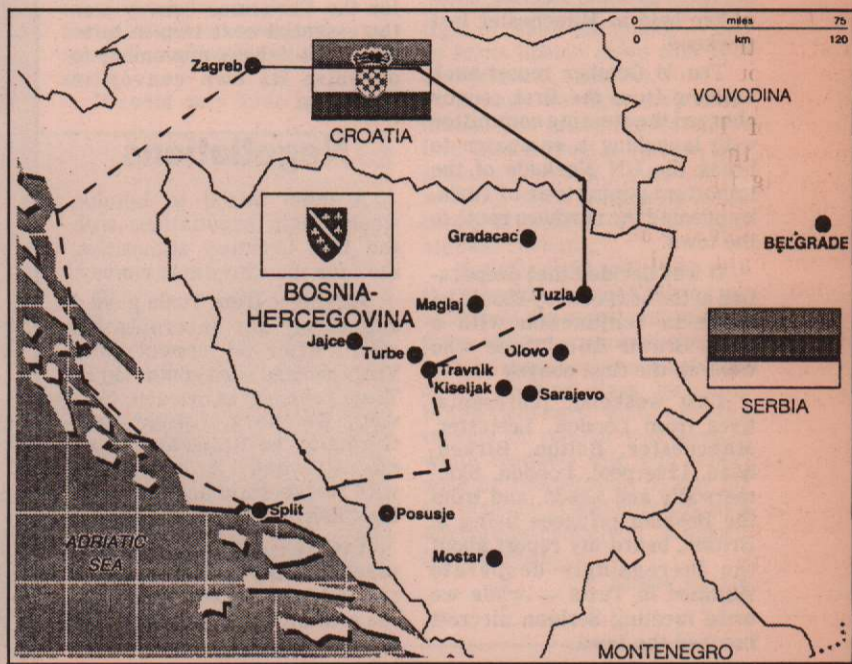
Break-up intention

THERE is no doubt that the people are being kept short of supplies by the United Nations — urged on by the European Union mediator Lord Owen and especially the British government — with the deliberate intention of forcing them to accept the break-up of their country into ethnically-cleansed ghettos.

Without adequate supplies of food and fuel, fundamentalists from all sides are beginning to exert pressure and this intention of the UN could become a reality.

The Red Cross and Médecins

Important the northern route



The northern route (unbroken line) and the current UN route via Split (broken line)

sans Frontière supply 'those in most need', but the UN will supply 'only refugees'. There are various organisations which supply only 'their own' ethnic group. In this hour of desperate need the news from Tuzla is that, just at a time when it is most necessary to keep a

firm grip on the principle of a united, multi-ethnic community, different sections of the people are set against each other.

This — in addition to the war itself, which is leaving families with dead and injured relatives, children without parents and peo-

CLIFF SLAUGHTER comments on some lessons of the Workers Aid for Bosnia's first convoy, and recent letters to Workers Press

GEORGE ANGUS ('Letters', 27 November), a participant in the Workers Aid convoy from Timex to Bosnia, described the disgust aroused in him by the work on that convoy and afterwards by the organisation known as USec — the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International'.

Surely, what he has to say is far more significant than just the impressions of an individual.

At the risk of hearing screams of pain about the importance of theory and continuity, I think that the issues raised by his letter will prove more useful than the oh-so-clever hindsight of correspondents who know exactly where every Trotskyist in the past went wrong.

Resolved

I for one simply cannot believe that if the working class had had a hundred Al Richardsons in 1945 the crisis of revolutionary leadership would have been resolved (see 'Letters', 20 November).

George Angus explained how, together with a small number of other workers, he took a big step forward and set out as part of the Workers Aid convoy, starting from the Timex factory on strike in Dundee. On the road, through many struggles, they met a big response

Those who are the c

from thousands of workers throughout Europe. *But*, they came into conflict, time and again, with the 'far-left' (joke) group USec, which tried in every way it could to sabotage the political aims of the convoy — as it still does.

THIS experience is very characteristic. As workers now find themselves *forced* to fight because of the insoluble crisis of capitalism, in *new* conditions where Stalinism has disintegrated, they have to strive to organise themselves politically, which in the end means organising in a Marxist party.

Yet many of them are put off 'politics' by the work of the 'groups', the 'activists', as they like to call themselves.

Groups such as USec are best understood as the waste products of the long-drawn-out crisis in the Fourth International — which was founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky as the world party of socialist revolution. I mean by that, that the Fourth International has undergone a long crisis and needs to be reconstructed; and that these groups are not the cure but the disease.

We in the Workers Revolutionary Party and Workers Press, working in the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, believe that this

reconstruction can only succeed if it is an integral part of the reconstruction of the working-class movement itself. Neither can be done without the other.

That is the question — not 're-groupment' of the existing 'groups'.

Problem

I repeat — they are part of the problem and not the cure.

There are within these groups comrades who will play their part in reconstructing the Fourth International — but only by breaking from them.

Whereas the middle-class antics of USec come into conflict with the needs of the political development of the workers who now come forward in the vanguard of the struggles, the WRP seeks in every way to make sure that *our* politics coincide with those workers' political needs.

That is why we took the lead in organising the convoy. And it is also why we try to be extremely self-critical in examining all our work — for example the problem of how to make Workers Press a paper that more and more expresses and leads the big struggles of the working class and does not read like a sectarian bulletin.

The task is not to proclaim yourself a 'vanguard party', ready-

made, which workers 'must join', but to play your conscious role in organising into a revolutionary party the vanguard of workers which comes forward in every struggle.

The very same questions came up in the movement against the

'Whereas the middle-class antics of USec come into conflict with the needs of the political development of the workers who now come forward in the vanguard of the struggles, the WRP seeks in every way to make sure that our politics coincide with those workers' political needs.'

pit-closures, announced in October 1992, and against the cuts in services.

I attacked some of these 'left groups' then (Workers Press, 29 May), when they tried to strangle that movement with 'structures', 'workshops' and all sorts of middle-class nostrums, and were correctly seen by the rank-and-file as just self-interested and arrogant preachers.

Then, as now, it was vital to

Resistance of northern to Tuzla

ple without homes, and the misery of starvation and lack of heat and light — puts unbearable pressure on those, like Selim Besalic, the mayor of Tuzla, and the trades unions in the region, who are making a big fight to lead the whole people against nationalism.

Their defeat would be a defeat for the fight against fascism and racism in the whole of Europe. We must look back at the defeats in Spain and Germany in the 1930s and ask ourselves whether we are prepared to stand aside today.

Overwhelming response

WORKERS Aid for Bosnia — a small organisation when it was founded on 6 June in London — received an overwhelming response from trade union branches, trades councils and shop stewards committees, even during the summer when many were away on holiday.

Out on the streets thousands of people gave aid and money for the convoy that left Dundee on 9 August and left Britain for mainland Europe from the TUC conference in Brighton on 6 September.

This response was international. There were trucks from Swedish, Hungarian, Slovakian, Italian and Belgian trades unionists, and the convoy was supported financially and practically by trades unions in Croatia, Slovenia, France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

Today, the response for Workers Aid's second convoy, which is being

'There is no doubt that the people are being kept short of supplies by the United Nations ... with the deliberate intention of forcing them to accept the break-up of their country into ethnically-cleansed ghettos.'

organised for Christmas, is tremendous.

Regions 1 and 6 of the Transport and General Workers' Union support the campaign, and donations have been received not only from local trade union organisations, but from the executive committees of the Fire Brigades Union, the

Graphical, Paper and Media Union, the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union, and the National Union of Journalists. And Manchester city council is discussing having a city-wide Christmas collection for Bosnia.

In Spain the campaign is standing by with aid and trucks. The Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb has alerted people and refugees from Tuzla living all over the world, and the campaign is now co-ordinating their response — aid, trucks and finance, as well as work with trades unions in the countries where they now live.

If Workers Aid for Bosnia is winning such support, think what the response would be if the TUC, the Scottish TUC, or even one national union made such an appeal.

Before the winter is out, the campaign should be backed up by a massive aid convoy from the European trades unions. This would strengthen the fight of those standing against fascism in the former Yugoslavia; it could, and would, strengthen the demand for the opening of the northern route to Tuzla.

■ **Contact the campaign at PO Box 9, Eccles SO, Salford M30 7FX. Phone 061-707 1584, or 071-582 5462.**

disease not the cure

prevent them from diverting the working class from politics — its own politics.

AT the bogus 'international' meeting called by USec and held in Manchester on 31 October, which was referred to by George Angus in his letter, USec's Alan Thornett — with the sole intention of hijacking the name 'International Workers Aid' — chose to point out to me that I had been secretary of an International Committee of the Fourth International in the 1970s which had been used by Gerry Healy to impose on its sections the policies of the WRP.

Explain

Not only did he forget to mention that he also was then a WRP central committee member. Above all, he 'forgot' that he himself is today a leading member of an 'International', USec, which has just readmitted to its ranks Michel Pablo, who regular Workers Press readers will know is a declared supporter of Serbian boss and 'ethnic cleanser' Slobodan Milosevic! Is this the way to organise 'International Workers Aid' to Bosnia?!

Perhaps he will explain in 'Socialist Outlook' (paper of USec's British section) and at all 'Internation-



Support for miners in October 1992: 'left groups' tried to strangle the movement

tional Workers Aid' meetings — and in the letters column of Workers Press, if he likes — how, as a supporter of International Workers Aid to Bosnia, he manages to stay in the same 'International' as Pablo.

We say quite openly to comrades like George Angus that we see the Workers International and its programme as the future for the Workers Aid struggle. Will Thornett explain how he sees that future as with the USec and Pablo, supporter of Milosevic?

Why is he silent on the question? I repeat that George Angus's letter and its implications deserve the most serious study. He has pointed out how the struggle now begun to reconstruct the internationalism of the working class

clashes inescapably with the middle-class politics of what I have called the 'waste products' of the crisis in the Fourth International. He is telling us in a living and contemporary way what Trotsky told the movement as long ago as 1935, before the founding of the Fourth International:

'For current affairs, the workers still give their votes to the old organisations. Their votes — but by no means their boundless confidence. On the other hand, after the miserable collapse of the Third (Communist) International, it is much harder to move them to bestow their confidence upon a new revolutionary organisation. That's just where the crisis of the proletarian leadership lies' (emphasis added).

City Lights

Optimistic Maxwells

THE BROTHERS Maxwell, Ian and Kevin, must be approaching their forthcoming trial in a more than optimistic mood. For whatever the strength of the cases against them, they hold a trump card: the body bringing the prosecution against them is the Serious Fraud Office.

As readers of this column will know, this body has hardly had a distinguished record in the most recent cases it has taken before the courts.

The sight of self-confessed fraudster Roger Levitt grinning from ear to ear as he walked almost scot-free from court two weeks ago must have lifted the spirits of Captain Bob's sons. And this was but the latest disaster for the SFO — set up in the late 1980s ostensibly to weed out corruption in the City of London.

Little wonder that former City operator Levitt declared himself a fervent believer in 'British justice'.

The SFO brought an array of some 60 charges against financial consultant Levitt which, if proven, would have seen him in jail for several years.

For reasons which had even top lawyers perplexed, the SFO decided to centre its case against Levitt on charges that he had engaged in 'fraudulent trading' instead of the simpler and more straightforward charge of theft. The case of 'fraudulent trading' is notoriously difficult to establish in court.

More than this, the SFO allowed itself to be tricked by Levitt's counsel, Jonathan Goldberg QC. Goldberg first got the judge to agree that much of the evidence assembled by the SFO against Levitt had nothing to do with fraudulent trading and could not therefore be brought before the jury.

Goldberg then declared in his opening speech that Levitt clearly had faith in his company because he had put £21 million of his 'own' money to keep the company afloat.

This was hardly a sign of intent to defraud, pleaded Goldberg. But what the jury was not allowed to know was that much of this money had been raised by Levitt under false pretences. They could not be made aware of this because it had already been ruled part of the 'inadmissible evidence'.

The SFO then did a deal with Levitt which in effect guaranteed that he would never see the inside of a prison cell. Levitt proposed that he would plead guilty to some of the minor charges against him, if the remainder were dropped and he was given an understanding that a custodial sentence would not be passed against him.

The SFO was set up to bring lawyers, accountants and police officers together to prosecute fraud in the City. But most of its results have been as unsuccessful as they have been expensive.

IF the SFO scored an own goal in the Levitt prosecution it looks likely to come out in even worse shape from the affair of Polly Peck, the company run by Asil Nadir, generous donator to Tory Party funds, that crashed owing millions.

Last summer Michael Mates, then a minister in the Northern Ireland office and strong supporter of Nadir, accused the SFO of plotting to de-stabilise Nadir's defence.

Although fiercely denied by the SFO and the government at the time, Mates's allegation seemed to get dramatic support last week when the attorney general admit-

ted that privileged documents for Nadir's defence had been handed over by the SFO to the prosecution.

Naturally Polly Peck's lawyers have seized on this 'blunder' to demand that the entire case against Nadir be dropped. All very convenient for Nadir, you might think.

And yet further grounds for the Maxwell brothers' optimism in their forthcoming appearance in court in what has been billed 'the mother of all fraud cases'.

Eastern trouble

EASTERN GERMANY, only three years ago a source of triumph for Chancellor Helmut Kohl, is now bringing him nothing but trouble.

On 25 November the chancellor lost his presidential candidate when Steffan Heitmann, an easterner, pulled out after controversy about his fitness for the job. Four days later the government of Saxony-Anhalt, one the four eastern Länder held by the ruling Christian Democratic Party, fell.

The Saxony-Anhalt government resigned because of a pay scandal involving the prime minister Werner Münch, and three of his ministerial colleagues.

Since 1990 the four men had overpaid themselves to the tune of DM900,000 (£350,000). Although trivial money by Italian standards, it is big for a population one in three of whom is unemployed or on work relief.

Cuban changes

IF the prospects for capitalism in eastern Europe and the former USSR are far from rosy, the same can surely be said of Cuba.

Courses in the working of capitalism have been introduced into the University of Havana, government minister Carlos Lage is talking of improving industrial efficiency through massive lay-offs and an end to subsidies, TV advertising is being introduced, and offshore gambling casinos have been set up.

In July Fidel Castro announced that it would no longer be illegal to transact business in US dollars, that certain trades would be opened to self-employment, and that huge state farms would be split into privately-run co-operatives.

But none of this can hide the fact that the government is broke; under US pressure no international banks will lend it money, and there is no reliable source of foreign capital, although Spain has increased its investments markedly over the last two or three years.

Unemployment — hitherto not a problem — is growing rapidly as factories close. Laid-off workers are paid 40-60 per cent of their wages, but only for three months. They are then told to find jobs in the countryside. Since October a record 1,400 Cuban refugees have turned up in rafts in Miami, Florida.

One of the few expanding areas of the economy is tourism, with Spanish tour operators in the lead in opening up the island's beaches to commercial development. Castro hopes that by 1995 over a million foreigners will take holidays in Cuba. But the \$265 million (£180m) tourism earned last year barely made up for the huge loss of revenue following a disastrous sugar harvest.

The efforts to sell property confiscated from US companies after the 1959 revolution are also proving futile, in the face of the US government's 'buyer beware' notices to embassies and consulates.

My best reads of 1993

THIS is the season when the literati make lists, in the Sunday broadsheets and elsewhere, of the books they've most enjoyed reading in the year that will soon be drawing to a close.

Their choices could be plotted on a diagram that would essentially take the form of a great daisy-chain, or circle of mutual admiration, thus: Dora Dribble thinks Billy Bragadocio's *A Mouthful of Spit* is relevant, powerful and a metaphor for our condition; Billy, for his part, hails Mavis Mudlock's *The Spice and the Spud* as significant, resonant, and a metaphor for our condition; while Mavis extols Dora Dribble's *Repossession* as meaningful, compelling and, of course, a metaphor for our condition.

This enthusiastic taking in of each other's washing may do a bit for bookshop sales in the last couple of weeks before Christmas; but each year it cuts less and less ice with the discerning reader.

And I'm sure the one-off book-buyer who is only looking for the book adapted from a TV adaptation of this or that classic is left quite cold by these unblushing puffs.

IF I mention here some of the books that have made an impression on me during the year I'm sure no one will accuse me of puffery.

In any case, only one of the books I want to draw attention to is a recent publication. It's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* by Paul Gilroy (Verso, £11.95).

This is frankly a difficult book, but well worth making the effort to read and digest. It traces the emergence of a modern culture that is not just African or Caribbean or black American or European but all these at once.

As we already knew from his *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987), Gilroy is probably the most intelligent, and certainly the most profound and original, of the younger generation of black writers in Britain. And he has read widely in the works of the black thinkers of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In *The Black Atlantic* he brings to bear not only a formidable intellectual armoury but also a long experience as practising musician and disc jockey, to produce a *tour de force* that no one concerned about winning young people for the socialist alternative can afford to ignore.

IN THE past year, for various reasons, I've read rather fewer political books than usual. One that sticks in the mind is Leopold Trepper's *The Great Game: the story of the red orchestra* (Michael Joseph, 1977).

This was anonymously translated, presumably from the French, by someone with little apparent grounding in Soviet history. So Stalin's famous 1930 'Dizzy with Success' article is disguised as 'The Vertigo of Success', the Young Communist International as 'Young People's International', and the butcher N.I. Yezhov, Stalin's chief of police at the height of the purges, as 'Ezov'.

All the same, this inside account of Soviet spying operations contains much of great interest.

I already knew that between the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 and the German attack on the USSR in June 1941 the word 'fascism' was rarely seen in Soviet or Comintern pub-

PERSONAL COLUMN

lications; from Trepper's book I learnt that in the same period guards in Soviet concentration camps were forbidden to call political prisoners 'fascists'.

That must have limited uncomfortably their range of invective against their victims, who included of course most of Leon Trotsky's supporters in the Soviet Union. To those brave men and women, the author pays this brief, simple, tribute, all the more telling for coming from a political opponent:

'Who did protest at that time? Who rose up to voice his outrage?

'The Trotskyites can lay claim to this honor. Following the example of their leader, who was rewarded for his obstinacy with the end of an ice-axe, they fought Stalinism to the death, and they were the only ones who did [emphasis added].

'By the time of the great purges, they could only shout their rebellion in the freezing wastelands where they had been dragged in order to be exterminated. In the camps, their conduct was admirable. But their voices were lost in the tundra. . . .

'They had the enormous advantage . . . of having a coherent political system capable of replacing Stalinism. They had something to cling to in the midst of their profound distress at seeing the revolution betrayed.'

These are words to ponder over.

DURING the year I've made an effort to read again some of the books I read in my childhood. But good resolutions alone don't turn many pages, and I only managed two such books: Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

Tom Sawyer is simply a rattling good children's yarn and nothing more; but *Huckleberry Finn* has layer upon layer of meaning and irony and wonderfully penetrating observation that were completely lost on me 55 years ago. If you've never read it, please do: there's a treat in store for you.

Rereading it sent me to one of the better recent books on Twain: Walter Blair, *Mark Twain & Huck Finn* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1960).

Among its other merits, this study quotes two of Mark Twain's pungent, if cynical, sayings: 'A classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read'; and 'A man who is a pessimist before 48 knows too much; if he is an optimist after it, he knows too little'.

LASTLY, and briefly, I greatly enjoyed:

Peter Linebaugh's *The London Hanged: Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (Allen Lane, 1991), a remarkable contribution to 'history from below';

G. Legman's *No Laughing Matter: Rationale of the Dirty Joke: Second series* (Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1978), though, as one wit has ruefully remarked of this 1,100-page book, 'to read it once is to read it twice'; and

The first volume of *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, 'The Beginnings to 1066' (Cambridge University Press, 1992), which makes it abundantly clear to chauvinists that 'the reasons for the spread of English are political, cultural and economic rather than linguistic'.

Peter Fryer

Television

Trouble at the palace

Review by Terry Brotherstone

THE best English writers, as is commonly known, are usually Irish. This certainly goes for current television critics for the London Sundays. John Naughton of the 'Observer' sometimes seems so far ahead of the pack that you fear he will have devoured the fox before the others have even caught the scent.

It must be said straightaway that Naughton is no mauler of fugitive quadrupeds. The unspeakable rather than the uneatable are his customary objects of pursuit. When his fangs pierce flesh with evident relish, you can be sure the quarry is a two-legged abuser of cultural or political authority.

Implosion

When, in 1990, She whom he has dubbed Baroness Hacksaw was preparing to meet her Bakerloo, the 'Observer's' man at the box chronicled the impending implosion of her entourage with an acumen and wit denied to the political commentators. Future historians who look at the back pages of the review sections will be in his debt.

One does not lightly disagree with such a critic. So when, after its first episode, he dismissed 'To Play the King' (BBC1, Sunday evenings, ending tomorrow) with the suggestion that its adapter, Andrew Davies, 'gets

so bored' by the style of Michael Dobbs (on whose novel it is based) 'that he invents new twists just to keep awake', I felt I must have seen a point where none existed.

On reflection, it is Naughton who this time failed to bury the nail in the woodwork. The watchability of the series no doubt owes more to Davies than to Dobbs, but watchable it is.

Its attraction does not lie mainly in Ian Richardson's routinely excellent performance as the ruthless and murderous Tory prime minister, Francis Urquhart (or 'F.U.' as his close colleagues call him, without the blessedly now retired Mrs Whitehouse raising an eyebrow). Neither is it primarily a result of the 'high production values', fulsomely praised by Dobbs himself.

What keeps me watching is the sense of reality it generates. I do not mean the reality of the story. This is predicated on the silly notion that King Charles III — Michael Kitchen, succeeding brilliantly in not exactly imitating the Prince of Wales — will sometime stand up for his people, against a prime minister who combines Lord Carrington-like urbanity with pit-bull politics from the kennel of Lilley, Howard and Portillo.

cent hairdo; and making light of receiving a prize for the worst described sex in a novel.

If the Dobbs-Bragg legal action ever gets to court, much entertainment is assured: the unshameable confronting the unspeakable. High production values will not be required.

Surprise

Back to the Irish. Deborah Warner's Dublin production of Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler' (PERFORMANCE, BBC2, 27 November) was a welcome surprise.

Maybe the splendid Fiona Shaw, as a neurotic, perpetually furniture-shifting Hedda, came close to playing the part against the text, but the setting — in Catholic Ireland rather than Protestant Norway — proved no gimmick. It forced a rethink about the play's essential — and essentially feminist — challenge, which depends neither on seeing fjords, nor on stressing the chilly religion of the North.

■ T.B. adds: This week's TV review was written before the publication in last Sunday's 'Observer' of John Naughton's lengthy critique of 'To Play the King'. While Naughton's comments on the deficiencies of the series are convincing, the difference of opinion on the question of whether or not it is compulsive viewing — and if it is, why so — remains unaffected.

Programme guide

Saturday 11 September PEEL SLOWLY AND SEE: AN EVENING WITH THE VELVET UNDERGROUND. An eight-hour binge marking the group's recent tour of Europe (10.10pm, Channel 4).

Monday 13 December WATCHDOG SPECIAL: 'The Price of Vanity'. The pseudo-scientific publicity employed by beauty manufacturers was successfully challenged by the US Food and Drug Administration, but in Britain the hype continues unchecked (7.30pm, BBC1). CUTTING EDGE: 'Royal Treatment'. Report on patient deaths at the Gartnavel Royal psychiatric institute in Glasgow (9pm, Channel 4). PANORAMA: 'Getting Away with Murder'. Known perpetrators of the horrific abuses in former Yugoslavia go unpunished (9.30pm, BBC1).

Tuesday 14 December ASSIGNMENT: 'Shutting the Asylum Door'. Despite the Geneva Convention Europe is turning its back on asylum-



An eight-hour tribute (left) to the Velvet Underground and their guru Andy Warhol is on Channel 4, Saturday. Donald Sutherland and Elliott Gould (right) in 'M*A*S*H', Channel 4, Sunday



seekers (7.45pm, BBC2). FROM BEIRUT TO BOSNIA: 'The Road to Palestine'. Robert Fisk continues his journey through the Muslim world by visiting the poverty-stricken Gaza strip (9pm, Channel 4).

Wednesday 15 December DISPATCHES. Report from former Yugoslavia on the role Croatia played in the break-up

of Bosnia-Herzegovina (9pm, Channel 4).

Selected films

BODY AND SOUL (1947). Corrupted boxer John Garfield finally regains his self-respect in this Robert Rossen classic (Saturday, 12.15pm, BBC2). CHELSEA GIRLS (1966). Andy

Warhol's seminal work is bound to lose much of its impact on the small (single) screen, but it's very much worth watching (Saturday, 12.30pm, Channel 4). M*A*S*H (1970). And equally irresistible is Robert Altman's black comedy (Sunday, 10pm, Channel 4).

JJ

Book review

No answers from the Keynesians

MICHAEL STEWART is a prominent advocate of the economics of John Maynard Keynes as well as being a supporter of the Labour Party.

He pleads for the abandonment of what he considers to be the disastrous policies pursued during the Thatcher years. These policies plunged the economy into crisis and he demands a return to Keynesian policies, that is to those of Maynard Keynes and his followers.

Keynes's book, 'The General Theory', was written in the 1930s in response to the biggest slump in the history of capitalism. Keynes concluded that unless the state intervened to regulate the economy, the future of capitalism was far from secure. In times of unemployment the state should manipulate the budget and spend more than it received in taxes.

For Keynes the slump was an expression, not of laws inherent to capitalism, but of the stupid policies pursued by the leaders of capitalism.

Michael Stewart, 'Keynes in the 1990s: A return to economic sanity', Penguin Books: pp. 134, £5.99

In similar vein Stewart suggests that monetarism was merely a piece of insane dogma which believed that inflation, the main illness threatening capitalism, could be cured by the simple expedient of bringing the money supply under control.

The author argues persuasively that if the rate of inflation was brought down by the Thatcher government this was due principally to the sharp drop in world commodity prices and the impact of heavy unemployment, rather than to any magical powers of monetarist doctrine. Keynesians have always opposed this heavy concentration on the elimination of inflation which Stewart considers a 'stage villain'.

It was Keynes who said that when wages had to be cut it was preferable to do so by allowing prices to rise rather than by cutting money wages directly. The latter course was likely to

lead to strike action whereas the former would not. For these reasons Keynesians are supporters of state control of incomes — usually dressed up as 'prices and incomes policies'. But naturally this implies greater regulation of the trades unions — the main instrument that bargains for wages.

But while Stewart can point to the failure of monetarism, he has little to say about the fate of Keynesian policies in the postwar years. When a Labour government attempted to spend its way out of a threatening slump in 1974, the City went on strike and refused to finance the state's rising budget deficit.

The government had to call in the International Monetary Fund which demanded major cuts in welfare services as a condition for bailing out the Wilson government. The Labour leaders duly obliged. It was then

that James Callaghan warned the Labour Party conference that the idea that the government could spend its way out of a depression was dead.

Like his fellow Keynesians, Stewart is preoccupied with national economic policy. Against all evidence, he claims that what happens to the British economy is mainly the result of policies carried out by British governments.

It is this claim that leads him to cast doubt on Britain's membership of the European monetary system; he believes that this would take away one of the chief weapons to combat rising unemployment: devaluation of sterling.

But it was just the competitive devaluations of the 1930s that plunged the capitalist system into its deepest-ever world crisis. The economists then shouted 'never again'.

Amongst other things, Stewart's book reveals that the Keynesians have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

Japanese union leaders help with wage cuts

JAPAN's bosses have flatly rejected workers' demands for higher wages, in this year's pay negotiations.

Despite falling living standards owing to the recession and the yen's high exchange rate, the employers have succeeded in their plans with the help of the labour bureaucracy of the Japanese TUC (*Rengo*).

The ruling class is planning further attacks, wage cuts, and dismissals.

The chair of the Japanese *Nikkeiren* employers' federation, Ken Nagano, has threatened workers since August, saying: 'We employers can dismiss our employees freely — but only as a last resort.'

Kei Imai of Nippon Steel has said: 'Discussing wages cuts must not be taboo.'

Takashi Kashiwagi of Hitachi declares that even if there aren't wage cuts there must be a wage freeze.

The motor industry has ignored a bonus rate agreed before the 1993 pay round. Bosses are trying to force lower wages unilaterally.

At Matsuda the trade union leaders have accepted the cut with no objections. And in

Toyota, while avoiding wage cuts the union leaders have accepted 'full co-operation in rationalisation'.

What the management's 'restructuring' means in reality is: dismissals, job cuts, short-time working, lay-offs, and speed-ups.

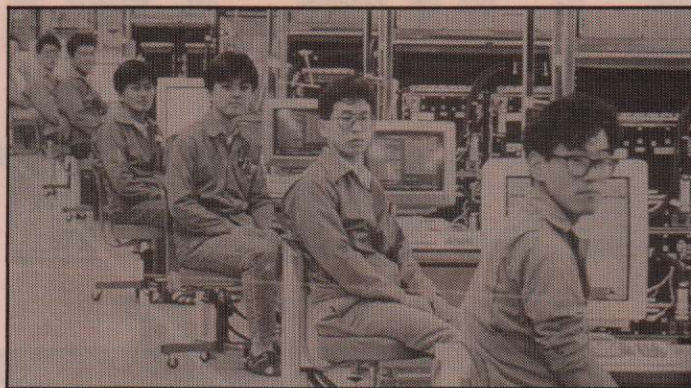
The Nippon Telephone & Telegram (NTT) company announced its plan for 10,000 'voluntary retirements' on 31 August. This plan for dismissals is the largest 'employment adjustment' since World War II. It is planning to shed a further 32,000 jobs by the end of the 1996 financial year.

The electrical industry has been particularly hit by falling exports caused by the high exchange rate. Toshiba has shed 5,000 jobs, Hitachi 2,000, Fujitsu 4,000, Sanyo 3,000, and so on.

The Nippon Steel company plans 3,000 'voluntary retirements'. Other companies have followed suit.

Nissan has decided to close its hi-tech factory at Zama. All firms are curtailing their operations and are scheming to cut jobs.

The pattern of 'rationalisations' is:



Japanese workers on the production line: jobs are threatened

■ To get rid of temporary, part-time and foreign workers. They are simply told not to come back the next day.

■ Then the full-time, and particularly older, workers are irrationally reassigned in their work to force them to take retirement.

■ Large-scale short-time working and lay-offs are introduced.

■ Increased workloads are forced on the remaining workers.

■ Finally the shift system is changed from day and night shifts to continuous working. The Japanese monopolies

are in the depths of depression. Japanese gross national product has been falling since October-December 1992.

The employers have been further hit by the high exchange rate and the US government's demand for access to the Japanese market.

The ruling class intends to make sure that it is the working class that pays for the crisis.

■ Information for this article was taken from 'Kaiho' ('Liberation'), weekly paper of the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League.

Bronwen Handyside reports

Two nations



Beware the sack of potatoes

AFTER the budget, we have Mr Lilley's proposals for medical tests to sort out you malingerers from the genuinely sick, who will get the new disability allowance.

Where previously the family doctor used his or her own judgement to decide whether claimants qualified for sickness benefits, the social security secretary now proposes that they must pass a series of tests.

All of this has a lot to do with the £6 billion annual cost for invalidity benefit. About 250,000 of the 1.5 million claimants are expected not to qualify for the new allowance — like the woman who was recently told by her benefits office that she should stop claiming because she was perfectly capable of doing nude life-modelling (she sued them for sex discrimination, and lost, but that's another story).

In a bold variation on the usual manner of examinations, you win points for *not* being able to pass certain tests. If you clock up 15 you can qualify.

Some of the criteria include:

Can't walk at all — 25 points. Can't walk up and down a flight of 12 stairs — 15 points.

Can't squeeze water from a sponge with each hand separately — 20 points. Speech can't be understood by family or friends — 24 points. Speech can't be understood by strangers — 17 points (and here is where the system begins to fall down — most MPs score the full 41 points on the last two).

Can't follow a TV programme with the sound turned up — 20 points. Can't recognise a friend an arm's length away — 20 points (what if you haven't got any friends?). No voluntary control of bladder — 22.5 points.

And my favourite. Can't pick up and carry a five pound bag of potatoes in either hand separately — 9.5 points.

There are just two questions I want to ask. What if you get a person who is not actually sick at all, but just *pretends* he/she can't pick up a five pound sack of potatoes?

And how many points do you get for being incapable of solving a terminal budget crisis?

Loyal, but not an opposition

THOUGH the Labour Party are rather coy about their plans for solving the budget crisis if they ever win another election, hints emerge that they are not quite the valiant opponents of every Tory strategy that they might wish us to think they are.

Despite the fulminations against the Tory plan to put VAT on fuel, nothing in their policy statements has ever guaranteed that they would not do exactly the same (and you would have to be as green as you are cabbage-looking to believe them if they did).

In fact the Labour conference two months ago voted for a shift of taxation from 'labour, services and income to energy resources and waste'.

Children still at risk

CHILDREN in care still run the risk of sexual abuse because of

a failure to implement reforms called for in a government-commissioned inquiry into the Frank Beck scandal.

Beck was jailed for life two years ago following 13 years of abuse while head of children's homes in Leicester.

The chair of the inquiry, Norman Warner, said he was worried about delays in implementing its 83 recommendations. Warner pointed to the lack of change in small, privately-run homes — the most rapidly increasing sector. Abuses are being carried out in these homes, and a number of them had had to be 'quietly shut down'.

No money had been given to provide for the training recommendations in the report.

'The history of children's homes shows that reports get shelved. There is nothing to suggest things will be any different this time,' Warner said.

'There was much hand-wringing at the time of Beck, and much concern, but there is still a steady flow of cases of people abusing children. I feel that emphasis has not been given to tackling the root of the problem.'

How to teach right from wrong

WHEN White Hart Lane School in north London opted out of local authority control, and began to manage its own budget, no one realised that this would lead to one of Britain's top athletics clubs slashing its training programmes.

Members of Haringey Athletics Club used to train at the purpose-built White Hart Lane running track.

Famous ex-members include Olympic hurdler Tony Jarrett and Olympic high-jumper Dalton Grant, as well as Daley Thompson and Seb Coe. Among the less famous are thousands of working-class kids.

When Haringey council handed over control of the track to the school, charges went up from nothing to £40 an hour. The athletics club was forced to cut its 60 metre sprint track bookings from 80 to ten two-hour sessions a year.

Club secretary Ian Grant said: 'Athletes in and around London are suffering because of the great increase in charging. The club is no longer in a position to justify spending that amount of money.'

John Isaacs, who coaches Tony Jarrett and is involved in the promotion of coaching in primary and secondary schools, said: 'The charging makes it very difficult for the next generation of athletes. To pay £80 a session is horrendous.'

He added: 'We used to have 150 at the track but it's now down to about 20 or 30.'

I suppose there is some kind of method here. In a situation of chronic unemployment which particularly affects young people, cut benefits, slash grants to schools, cut money to councils which provide activities and facilities for the young — and then build bigger prisons and lower the age at which children can be jailed. Alternatively you can stick them in a home where they can be abused.

Oh yeah, and at some stage you're supposed to teach them right from wrong.

If you have any material for this column, please send it to me at Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Letters

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Freud the fraud

I WOULD generally agree with Peter Fryer that Freud was a fraud, (Personal Column, 20 Nov). However I think that certain minor qualifications should be made.

Freud did at least raise a number of important questions. For example he highlighted, in a previously untried manner, the prevalence in capitalist society of unconscious motivation. This implies that people often do things for reasons they do not understand.

He also established what is known as the principle of psychological determinism. This implies that neurotic symptoms are not haphazard or meaningless, but have a definite psychological cause.

It should also be remembered that Freud made a significant contribution to the development of psychosomatic medicine. This is based on the justified assumption that many physical illnesses are of psychological origin.

Having made these minor qualifications (some others could also be made), it must be stated that Freud's theories are not only false. They are reactionary and strongly opposed to Marxism.

Freud believed in the existence of an unconscious mind, known as the *id*. The contents of the *id* were unknown to individuals (except to Freud and his followers).

The most significant aspects of the *id* were firstly, innate aggressive urges, and secondly, what Freud called the Oedipus complex. It is necessary to consider each of these in turn.

For Freud, the innate urge to commit aggression could never be fully controlled by the conscious mind (known as the *ego*).

Freud likened the *ego* to a man on horseback, (the horse representing the *id*). Normally the man had control over the horse, but every so often it would rear up and throw him.

Wars and other upheavals were thus, according to Freud, inevitable. They were in no way due to the contradictions inherent in class society, but solely

due to innate and largely uncontrollable impulses inherent in all individuals.

Freud considered his greatest achievement to be the 'discovery' of the alleged Oedipus complex.

This is the innate tendency in a young child to desire sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex. This is said to be accompanied by feelings of jealousy directed towards the parent of the same sex.

The Oedipus complex plays a central and essential role in Freudian psychoanalytic 'treatment'. This 'treatment' often takes many years to complete and frequently costs many thousands of pounds.

During this 'treatment' the task of the psychoanalyst is to brainwash the patient into believing that as a young child he or she actually did want sexual relationships with the parent of the opposite sex. Once the patient has accepted this myth, he or she is deemed 'cured'.

Freud is essentially saying here that social situations engendered by capitalism really have little to do with neurotic disorders.

Capitalist social relations imply alienation, wars, poverty, unemployment, the rat race, a callous disregard for other people's welfare, deliberate cruelty, marital problems, loneliness and so on.

It is aspects of capitalism like these that give rise to neurotic disorders.

But for Freudians, the real cause of neurotic disorders is the mythical Oedipus complex. As they see it, the social situations engendered by capitalism can at best only be of secondary importance.

Incidentally it is worth mentioning that, in raising the question of sex, Freud incurred the wrath of institutions such as the Catholic Church.

However, he made his peace with capitalism by blessing the institution of marriage — a breeding ground for neurotic disorders if ever there was one.

Apart from a few minor qualifications, I would agree with Peter that Freud was a fraud. His psychoanalytic method of 'treatment' is correspondingly fraudulent.

John Robinson London SE3

■ A book by John Robinson — *The Individual and Society: A Marxist Approach to Human Psychology* — is to be published in February 1994 by Index Academic.

Waving flags

REFERRING to the Moscow clashes this Autumn, when Yeltsin sent tanks against parliament, Panos from Athens (letter Workers Press 4 December) says:

'The fact that on the streets (as was shown by Cable News Network footage) many of the demonstrators were waving red flags or Soviet flags seems to be a mere detail for you.'

Writing in 'Casablanca' magazine (November-December 1993), Tair Tairov who defended parliament in 1991, but stayed away this time, explains:

'Western cameras focused on the red flags. . . But we noticed the swastika-cross buttons of Russia's fascist party — National Unity.'

'Their paramilitaries, trained in the ethnic wars of borderlands like Moldavia, were in the vanguard when the television station and municipal buildings were stormed.'

Tairov, an Uzbek, says ultranationalists and Nazis rallied around parliament's call to restore 'the Soviet empire'. He believes Yeltsin let them storm the television station, to provide a pretext for his own massive use of force, in which hundreds were massacred.

Seeing this too as a warning to nationalities attempting independence from Russia, he also points to racism under Yeltsin, with thousands of Azeris, Georgians and others stopped by Moscow police, and deported.

The writer wonders drily whether Yeltsin's new constitution will need to 'include some legal provisions for a military assault' on parliament as 'a prerequisite for developing democracy in Russia?'

Western imperialists' endorsement (though not unanimous) of Yeltsin's brutality tells us, if we needed telling, about their commitment to 'democra-

cy', and reinforces the Workers International's warnings about what sort of capitalist rule faces workers in Russia and eastern Europe.

But should it weaken our opposition to the Stalinist-fascist Rutskoï-Khasbulatov 'alternative'?

These bureaucrats are not defending the 'planned economy' but their own privileges. Russian nationalists and fascists are sending mercenaries to fight for Serbia, where they spend their time attacking workers and students who oppose the Milosevic regime.

They are not fighting against imperialism, but for pan-Slav, Orthodox hegemony, the old Czarist imperial aims.

Comrade Panos refers to 'the defeat of Stalinism'. Only the political revolution by the working class could achieve that.

Instead, while the Stalinist system and policies have collapsed under the weight of contradictions, (chief among them being the struggle of the working class), the Stalinist bureaucrats remain, now divided only on how to get the best deal for themselves from imperialism.

Some wish only to be comprador-stoges, others aspire to wield empire in their own right. We must insist on the political independence of the working class, against both.

Panos says there has been an 'indisputable shift in the relation of power in the world in favour of capital and against labour'.

Well, I dispute it! So do workers resisting capitalist policies — in Athens, among other places.

There remains a crisis of leadership in the working class, however, the more glaring now because it is down to us, as Trotskyists, to come forward.

What use would a Fourth International be if, like the Pabloites, it was content with arguing which set of rotten leaders, nationalists and bureaucrats, was the 'lesser evil'?

How could you expect enthusiasm from the working class and youth for such a miserable prospect? Hasn't the campaign around Workers Aid for Bosnia given us a glimpse of what else is possible?

Charlie Pottins London SW12

Workers Aid for Bosnia wins support in Spain

AT THE end of October committees of Workers Aid for Bosnia were created in Barcelona, Madrid and Algeciras.

Among its founders are the PST (Workers Socialist Party — LIT), GPOR (Group for the Construction of a Workers' Revolutionary Party — for the rebuilding of the Fourth International), POR (Workers Revolutionary Party — LRCI) and 'En Defensa del Marxismo' (an independent workers' paper).

The action programme from the 6 June founding conference of Workers Aid for Bosnia in Lambeth, south-west London, has been adopted with some modifications to the political situation in Spain.

In Barcelona we have edited the first bulletin of Workers Aid ('Ajuda Obrera a Bosnia') explaining the aim of the campaign and including reports and documents from the first convoy.

Intervention

The work for the Christmas convoy to Bosnia has started with our presence and intervention in the 25 November demonstrations called by the trades unions.

Here hundreds of thousands from across Spain protested against the government and employers' renewed attack on working conditions. A general strike is planned for the end of January 1994.

From JONAS NILSSON
in Barcelona

In Barcelona, we participated in a demonstration against the war in the Balkans on 28 November, organised by different solidarity and anti-racist groups.

Our work has been very positively received by the participants on both demonstrations and we are collaborating with certain trades unions — mainly the CGT union federation and Comisiones Obreras.

We're working to widen the campaign with the creation of local committees in workers' districts, and are trying to get a more active support from the trades unions, especially their support for the demand to open the northern route to the Bosnian mining town of Tuzla (see pages 4&5).

We aim to send one lorry on the Christmas convoy, which is meeting in Zagreb, Croatia, on 18 December. You'll hear more from us later.



Workers Aid protesting in Zagreb against the role of the UN Protection Force in stopping the first convoy — the Christmas convoy meets in the city on 18 December

Photo: Anthony Myers

Heating shortage bites in Ukraine



WITH temperatures of 22 centigrade below freezing, Ukraine's electricity generation is down 45 per cent on last year and there are sporadic power cuts. Schools and factories in Ukraine are closing because of lack of heating.

The country was cut off from the Russian grid on 20 November because it was 'draining too much power'. Ukraine announced in its turn that it was cutting off electricity exports to eastern Europe. (The picture shows a gas cooker being used against the winter cold for this child.)

MORE than 10,000 Bulgarian ore miners took action last week to demand payment for five months' wage arrears, which is a long-established measure used by employers.

There were 140 miners striking underground, 1,000 on all-out strike, and 9,000 who staged a one-hour sympathy stoppage. The action was organised by the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, the former 'official' union.

ANC gives big business nothing to fear over future

THE capitalist monopolies have nothing to fear from an African National Congress government in South Africa.

This is clear from a report, 'Making Democracy Work', issued by the Macro Economic Research Group (MERG). It is the product of a collaborative effort on behalf of the ANC, produced by some of the world's leading economists.

Its chief author, Dr Vella Pillay, is a founder of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain and former general manager of the Bank of China. The Australian government gave £700,000 to help finance the project and the Tory government chipped in with £60,000.

While the 330-page report calls for massive cash injections

into education and training, job creation and health, it makes clear that there will be no nationalisation, certainly not of the land.

There could be some state purchase of white farmland saddled with unsustainable levels of debt, but the report stresses that there should be no 'punitive action'.

Control

Personal income tax should be limited to its present share of the national income, says the report, and the present rate of company taxation preserved, although its base would be somewhat widened.

The report's proposal that the Reserve Bank should be sub-

ject to political control has already been rejected by an agreement between the ANC and the government.

■ A survey of business leaders in South Africa published last week showed that 68 per cent wanted Nelson Mandela to be the country's next president. Under a third backed F.W. de Klerk and there was no support for Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who was deemed 'power hungry and irrational'.

The survey was commissioned by the 'Weekly Mail and Guardian' and conducted among the chief executives or divisional heads of 70 of the largest companies on the Johannesburg stock exchange, 25 privately owned companies, and five quasi-state corporations.



S. African President De Klerk and Nelson Mandela after agreeing a new constitution last month

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