

TORIES HIT AT PAY AND JOBS

CUTS in wages and the loss of more than 40,000 jobs face half a million workers in the public sector.

This will be the result of the pay award of up to 3 per cent for teachers, nurses and others in the public sector, which the government has insisted that the award must come from 'economies'.

With heavy tax increases due in April and inflation starting to rise, double this level was needed just to maintain living standards, union leaders calculate.

Scrap

The government has also declared its intention to scrap centralised wage bargaining in the National Health Service.

Welcoming the pay proposal, Prime Minister John Major said the government was determined to introduce a 'significant measure of local pay determination from next year'.

Despite this latest round of attacks on wages, jobs and trade union organisation, attempting to divide worker from worker, it has brought little response from trade union leaders, who have refused to work out any plans to fight the government.

Yet this is the second year that teachers' pay has been squeezed. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) calculates that

an increase of 6.35 per cent is needed to keep pace with inflation and tax increases.

While Value Added Tax on fuel and other taxes due to come into effect from April onwards will increase the tax burden on the average family by up to £10 a month.

Rising

And at the public sector union, UNISON, general secretary Alan Jkinson said the pay increase should have been doubled to counteract rising prices.

Ian Sheperdson, of Midland Global Markets, said: 'Settling for 2.7 to 3 per cent means one hell of a productivity gain and a lot of people being sacked.'

Chris Trinder of the Public Finance Foundation estimates that some 40,000 jobs will go to cover the pay rises.

When representatives of the

5.8 million public sector workers met at the beginning of this month they merely agreed 'to continue to emphasise the impact of the three year policy on services, jobs and democratic accountability as well as on the living standards of the workers affected'.

The meeting of the TUC's public services committee said there would be a 'major conference' at its headquarters, Congress House, on 3 March. But last week the TUC and individual unions could give no details of this 'major conference'.

The committee said there was support 'in principle' for a 'public sector day' but the form it would take was not decided.

An NUT representative told Workers Press that the union was urging pressure on MPs and said the 3 March conference was to be considered further.

A spokesperson for UNISON

welcomed the 'thawing' of the government's pay freeze. Members of the union might want to go further than the TUC, she told Workers Press.

But Jkinson, although chair of the public services committee, was 'tied by what the rest of the unions wanted to do'.

The best Labour's health spokesman David Blunkett could manage was to call health minister Virginia Bottomley 'a political illiterate' who had got her sums wrong.

Refuse

In other words, these leaders refuse to take up a fight against the government.

Jkinson's warning that the government faces a 'rough ride' over pay is, as far as he is concerned, simply talk.

Mick Graham, local govern-

ment secretary of the GMB local government workers' union, was more honest when he said that the 4 million public sector workers not covered by the review bodies would see 3 per cent as the 'benchmark'.

In other words these well-paid leaders accept wage cuts for their members and cave in without a struggle.

It is now more urgent than ever that the working class — employed and unemployed — unites to fight the government.

But such unity can be achieved only in struggle against the trade union and labour leaders, whose betrayals mount as the government's crisis deepens.

This will form the basis of the Unite the Struggles conference being held in Manchester over this weekend. A full report will appear in next week's issue.

BY THE EDITOR



Fire Brigades Union members came from around the country on 3 February to protest at planned cuts in Hereford and Worcester's fire service that would hit firefighters' jobs. The lobby was of the county council's finance committee, which backed down by not going ahead with the proposals. Photo: Mark Salmon

Hungarian trades unions support Workers Aid

SUPPORT for Workers Aid for Bosnia is growing rapidly among trades unionists in Hungary, who are now preparing to take part in the all-European Workers Aid convoy that is due to leave the Croatian border town of Zupanja for the mining town of Tuzla in Bosnia on 26 March.

The centre of the Workers Aid campaign in Hungary is not the capital, Budapest, but Tatabánya, the main town of Komárom-Esztergom county, the largest mining region in Hungary. Other mining towns in the region are Oroslány and Dorog.

The committees here must also be considered as the organisers of the convoy not only in Hungary but also Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic.

The main organisers are:
■ Peter Pintér, in Tatabánya, Komárom-Esztergom county Hungarian Socialist Party official.

■ Antal Schalkhammer, in Budapest, national president of the largest Hungarian miners' union.

■ Ferenc Szamper and Béla Caicsmann, in Oroslány, organisers of the 'Solidarity' union in the 3,000-strong Márkushégy mine and in the town as a whole.

■ László Asztalos, in Oroslány, organiser of the Workers' Council union for the whole of Komárom-Esztergom county.

■ Géza Molnár, in Budapest, national vice-president of the important Left Youth Association.

■ Zoltán Lukács, in Tatabánya, organiser of the Left Youth Association for the miners' region.

Others are also involved in the work, without the formal adherence of their unions. We hope they will be added later.

■ See page seven for Workers Aid activities throughout Europe.

German jobless now 6 million

THE number of people out of work in Germany has reached 6 million, the government admitted last week.

The official figures of those actually registered for unemployment benefits soared to 4 million in January, an increase of 340,000 on the previous month.

Nearly one in eleven workers are unemployed in west Germany, while in the east the figure is one in six. Unemploy-

ment in the east shot up by 118,000 during January as public support schemes ran out of cash following spending cuts.

Dramatic

In the west the increase was even more dramatic as 220,000 workers were sacked. German bosses are now insisting that wages be slashed to restore the competitiveness of German factories in world markets.

S. African elections: an urgent appeal

£220 in so far

THE South African section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International is standing candidates in the coming national elections.

We know that our readers in every country will be inspired by this news. But our South African comrades need your help — today. Registration of candidates and

payment of deposits must be done by 10 February.

Our South African comrades are working in every way possible to stand three candidates: in Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth. The deposit per candidate is 5,000 rand (about £1,000).

Everything depends on international support, in the first place on financial support.

The African National Con-

gress's policy of class collaboration, with the Stalinist Communist Party of South Africa at its core, must be challenged.

The Workers International in South Africa is fighting for the trade union federation COSATU to end its 'tripartite alliance' with the ANC and SACP. It is fighting for an electoral challenge that will be a step towards the political independence of the working class.

The ANC and SACP leaders peddle the lie that apartheid can be ended while capitalism in South Africa remains.

As a matter of urgency please phone, fax or post your donations for this first essential part of the election fund:

South African Elections Appeal, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB, Britain. Phone: 071-582 8882. Fax: 071-582 8834.

The state is the real parasite

THE Tory government's latest attack on so-called 'foreign scroungers off the state' was entirely to be expected. As the economic and social crisis in Britain intensifies, the ruling class is driven more and more to racism and jingoism to divert attention away from the root cause of this crisis: a decaying capitalist system.

So Peter Lilley, the secretary of state for social services, presents us with a picture of millions of 'foreigners' swarming into Britain and living a life of luxury at the state's expense.

Equally predictable was the response of the Labour opposition. Donald Dewar, Lilley's shadow, leapt forward to reassure the Tory government that he and his colleagues were equally determined to stamp out abuse of the welfare services. Dewar simply added that the number of people coming from abroad and drawing unemployment and other related benefits was small and therefore the problem was not so grave.

Naturally it is quite beyond Dewar's bourgeois mind that unemployed workers, as well as those in work, have the right to look for work or sell their ability to work wherever they can. As on every other issue there is no difference of principle between the Tories and Labour's front bench.

Lilley condemns people for sponging off the state. In fact this well-heeled bourgeois politician stands reality on its head. For the biggest parasite of all in present-day society is the capitalist state itself.

* * * * *

LENIN once observed that no question had been more confused by bourgeois ideologists than that of the state. This was because no other question is of such vital interest to the ruling class.

The direct representatives of the capitalist class, as well as the reformists, present the state as some kind of supernatural force that has existed since time immemorial: it supposedly has no class content and is merely a tame instrument of order, an 'arbiter' called upon to resolve disputes which arise from time to time between people regardless of their class position.

The very opposite is the case: in class society the state is a political instrument 'a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another'. In capitalist society the state is a power by means of which the capitalist class maintains its rule.

* * * * *

THE role and functions of the state have grown dramatically throughout the present century, the period of capitalist decline and disintegration. Parliament, the huge and growing bureaucratic administrative machine with its armies of officials, the intelligence agencies, the courts and prisons, all of them have the same function: they form the political authority of the capitalist state.

The fact that this apparatus gets ever bigger, becomes more openly oppressive, is an expression of the decay of capitalism, of the fact that the ruling class has increasingly to rely on open coercion to maintain its power.

Apart from anything, this monstrous bureaucratic entity becomes an ever greater burden on millions and millions of ordinary people. Today they are paying record high levels of taxation to help finance a machine that defends the interests of a tiny clique of monopolists and financiers, who own and control the vast majority of the wealth of this country.

That is why the task of the working class is to destroy this state and, by creating its own organs of power, prepare for the eventual disappearance of the state.

Letters

'Labour Review' revisited

I AM writing in response to Peter Fryer's interesting piece on 'Tom Kemp and "Labour Review"' and to draw attention to Seymour Papert's important contributions to that fine theoretical magazine.

My friend Peter Fryer's memory is, however, at fault in suggesting that I had not the 'remotest connection with the [Socialist Labour League]'. During the late 1950s, through Seymour Papert's good influence, I and others in the 'ultra-left' grouping in the 'Socialist Review' group co-operated with those like Fryer, Brian Pearce and others in the SLL we regarded as kindred spirits or libertarian socialists committed to direct action, workers' control and rank-and-file creativity.

Despite the hostility of Tony Cliff, now leader of the Socialist Workers Party, expelled (1985) WRP leader Gerry Healy, and expelled (1992) Militant leader Ted Grant, the other Brian (Behan) and Seymour Papert were responsible for a great deal of co-operation amongst the most rebellious of the young socialists in all existing tendencies and groupings.

When British public and workers' consciousness of the real nature of apartheid existed at a very low level, Seymour contributed at least one major article on South Africa. This touches on a hidden aspect of the history of Trotskyism in Britain during 1957-59.

In those years Seymour, his first wife Donna, Mike Maddison, David Prynne, myself and a very small group of young people were committed to the task of trying to reunify all the existing Trotskyist groups.

As the most left-wing members of the 'Socialist Review' group, Tony Cliff labelled us 'the ultra-left faction' of the group led by Michael Kidron

and himself. As the whole group nationally did not amount to more than 200 people, we thought our importance was being exaggerated.

I had just completed a two-year full-time course at Ruskin College, Oxford, where I had specialised in history, though my real interest was imaginative literature. During the early part of my five-and-a-half year exile in London, Cliff directed me to work for 'Socialist Review' and specialise in labour history, though I often wrote about imaginative literature.

But I differ from Fryer in thinking that those years did constitute a 'golden age'. Another golden age will return more dramatically and powerfully than any of us can imagine at a moment when the forces of sloth and reaction seem to be all powerful. That's why we need novels like William Morris's 'News from Nowhere'.

Moreover the young socialists in and out of the various Trotskyist groups in London in the late 1950s worked together in the broad labour movement, in Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament demonstrations and on picket lines.

For the 'crime' of going to the pub and talking to 'Healy's' young socialists, David Prynne, Seymour, Donna, myself and others were hauled before the national committee of the 'Socialist Review' group.

Being repeatedly accused of 'factionalism' and softness towards Gerry Healy — that was a real joke — we built our own group within a group.

Out of all that conflict and drama of ideas, Seymour taught me about 'class forces' and the process of historical development.

Moreover, all of the young socialists produced documents, discovered the (at least theoretical) importance of sexual freedom, something of the origins of Pan-Africanism and the need to apply 'the Marxist method'.

As our representative in Paris, Seymour worked with the 'Socialisme ou Barbarie' group and Raya Dunayevskaya in Detroit.

Equally important was the

existence of 'Labour Review', a more important journal than the more glamorous 'New Reasoner', and the co-operation inside the class struggle of young socialists across the whole spectrum of the Left.

More than anyone it was the Paperts who taught many of us then the importance of rank-and-file co-operation and socialist mutual aid.

Although Healy wanted us to contribute to a discussion about the theory of state capitalism in 'Labour Review', we nominated Seymour to contribute a major article on South Africa. At the same time I wrote a much smaller piece on Chartism and sectarianism in the British labour movement.

Although my loyalty in those years was, despite everything, to the 'Socialist Review' group, we recognised that 'Labour Review' was making a bigger impact on opinion in the labour movement than any other magazine in Britain.

One of the finest Marxist thinkers and fighters of his generation in the 1950s, Seymour's articles are still valuable.

I cannot remember whether Seymour's contacts were with Brian Pearce or Tom Kemp, though he certainly kept communications with Healy open and active.

But it was a good time for comradesly mutual aid, tolerance, theoretical advance and even sexual equality.

I, for one, owe more to my years of exile in the London labour movement than to any university. I am determined to repay that debt by completing the books I am working on concerning the history of John Bull's socialism and the cumulative history of socialist martyrs.

In those years no one had yet written about how some of us acquired our 'cultural capital' (as distinct from the inherited capital the rich bequeathed to their offspring) inside the labour movement.

Yet despite the inordinate importance that we attached to the acquisition of knowledge, we did not underestimate the im-

portance of participating in the class struggle.

In my own case, when a popular song 'Mack the Knife' was always on the radio, MI5 interviewed me in my bedsitter in Highgate during a long afternoon for writing in a young socialist newsletter under the title of 'Knife the Mac'.

Age has done nothing to soften my hostility to the existing social order East and West, and I want to endorse Peter Fryer's main points about the importance of 'Labour Review' in providing theoretical clarity and inspiration to very many socialists.

James D. Young
Falkirk

For all to read

IN WELCOMING the new weekly contribution from Terry Brotherstone (John Fordun), who has so courageously agreed to step into the void created by Peter Fryer's temporary absence, I, for one, would like to make it clear that I shall resist his attempt to *privatise* the column. As and when the occasion demands I shall continue to address *all* my grumbles, comments and criticisms about what appears in the pages of Workers Press c/o the Editor.

Furthermore, I would be greatly surprised to learn that Terry's understanding of the current journalistic responsibility he has undertaken has been accorded identical terms to those extended to Peter himself (who is *not* a member of the WRP). '[S]till a personal ... column' indeed!

I hasten to add that this brief retort is not a case of sour grapes regarding my being barred from entering the competition Terry has announced, (the answer to which, in any case, I've not the slightest idea). Nor is it because his invaluable literary talents have been transferred, however temporarily, from the television department!

Jeff Jackson
London SW16

WORKERS PRESS £3,000 MONTHLY FIGHTING FUND

IN SO FAR: £939.67

A GOOD start for February was helped by an extra £75 contribution from TJ in Hull — thanks. The amount is £200 ahead of what we need by this time of the month if we're going to make the £3,000 target.

But we can't just stand still. Much of the computing equipment is in imminent need of servicing and we need more advanced equipment to keep up with the work load, not just of the paper but of the WRP as a whole, with leaflets, pamphlets and books coming up the line.

And, there's still the shortfall from last month to make up.

So in reality we really need the full £3,000 — and more — to make this paper reach ever higher standards of journalism and reach out into ever wider layers to rebuild working-class consciousness. Please, try to get out and get the money.

Mike Cooke

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

Coming soon

TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY: 'Shorter Working Time in Britain and Europe' Institute of Employment Rights public meeting, TUC Congress House, Lecture Theatre, Great Russell Street, London WC1, 6.45pm. Nearest tube Tottenham Court Road.

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY: 'Council for Academic Standards and Academic Freedom' meeting, 1pm-3pm, Mary Fisher Room,

Quaker International Centre, 1-3 Byng Place, London WC1. Nearest tubes Euston and Goodge Street.

TUESDAY 8 MARCH: 'The Challenge of Creationism'. Start of South Place Ethical Society course by Mike Howgate MSc., 6.30pm-8.30pm (and each Tuesday following in March). At the Conway Hall in Red Lion Square, London WC1. Admission is £1 and the nearest tube is Holborn.

IRISH NIGHT FOR BOSNIA

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8.00 - MIDNITE!

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THE TREETOPS
SPECIAL GUESTS:
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ALAN YOUNG.

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Mother's plea: 'Don't deport my son'!

AN Algerian mother flew into Britain last week to plead with the Home Office not to deport her son back to Algeria, where his brother was recently sentenced to death by the military-backed regime.

Abdul Rahman Bouzad, being held in High Down prison, Surrey, is one of more than 20 Algerian asylum-seekers detained by the British authorities.

Fears are growing for the health of nine Algerians and a Zairean asylum-seeker, who have been on hunger strike for nearly two weeks in Pentonville prison. They complain that they have been placed among criminal prisoners, although they have been convicted of no crime.

On Tuesday they refused to speak to a Home Office official sent to question them. Several fear for their lives if they are sent back.

Wracked

Algeria has been wracked by repression, torture and terror since the military suspended

elections and tried to crush the opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Left-wing parties have also been suppressed.

A spokesperson for London's Algerian community said they had learnt that a man called Riad and another, detained last year and deported, had both been killed.

One of the asylum-seekers threatened with deportation is a former prison officer himself, whom friends say could find himself a target for either side in what is becoming a bloody civil war of assassinations.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

Labour councillor 'killed in satanism row'

MANCHESTER'S deputy education committee chairman, Labour councillor Chris Rogers, was stabbed to death by a gay friend in a row over witchcraft and satanism, a jury heard last week.

Peter Joyce QC, prosecuting, told Nottingham crown court that Rogers and Colin Henry had had a row after watching a sado-masochistic video together at Henry's home in Nottingham last February, where Rogers had gone with another friend.

Rogers, a Labour councillor in Chorlton, Manchester, had changed into a black PVC basque, and the three men got into bed together.

Then Rogers, who supported

satanism, had an argument with Henry, calling him stupid for believing in witchcraft.

Henry allegedly told police: 'He called me stupid. There is no problem. I killed him. I said I would do it and I have done.' Later he told his mother: 'He was not a very nice person at all. This guy was really evil, mother really evil. This guy has killed other people.'

Scratches

Pathologist Stephen Jones said he had found scratches and scars on Rogers which indicated certain practices pursued by the dead councillor. Rogers also had a skin graft to cover a burn on his chest.

'Hands off Greenwich NHS'

GREENWICH HEALTH-CARE trust is planning swinging cuts of health services in the south-east London district.

It is clear that the trust board has no intention of fighting for the cardiothoracic and neuroscience services to be retained locally. They are going along with plans for only one hospital in Greenwich, the Queen Elizabeth Military hospital, and for reduced beds.

Since November the 'Hands off Greenwich NHS' campaign has concentrated on a petition to fight the actions of the trust.

The petition is to be presented to parliament on Friday 19 February at 9.30am, followed by a group delivering a letter to John Major at 10 Downing Street.

Meeting

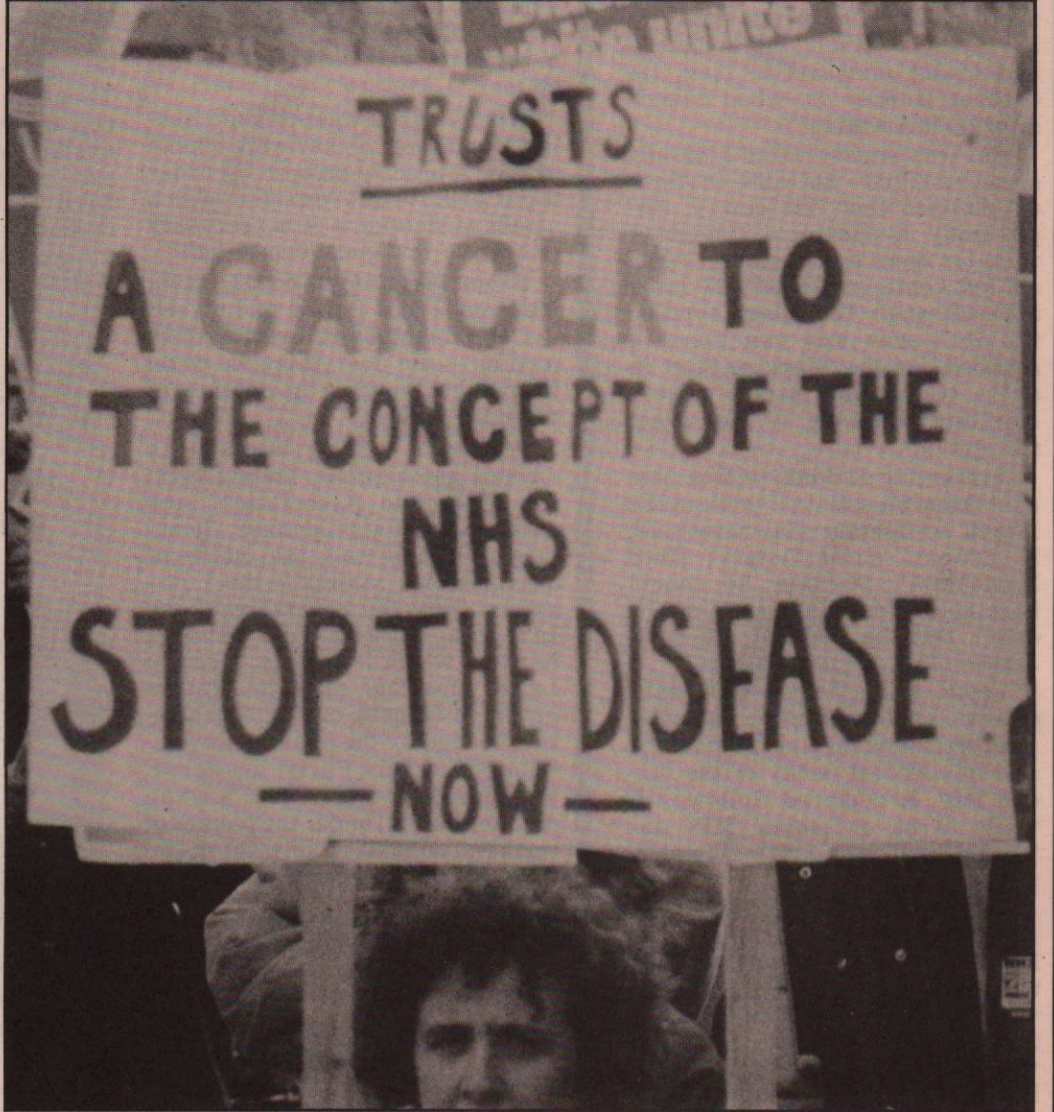
During a meeting between the Hands off Greenwich NHS campaign and the trust executive on 27 January it was revealed that:

- A scanner from the US is still not functioning despite a press statement to the contrary.

- False economies, such as buying cheaper X-ray film, have resulted in damage to the X-ray equipment costing not less than £1,500.

- A statement, which claimed that funds were being lost by the trust and were going to 'fund-holding' general practices, was incorrect. To date there are only six fund-holding practices within the Greenwich Healthcare Trust area.

Already 120 beds have been closed on the Brook hospital. By 1995 Brook will be shut. Until 1998 the military and the



March against Greenwich NHS cuts, December 1993

Photo: Alan Clark

trust will work together on the QEMH site.

According to the Trust, as of 1998, the Greenwich District Hospital (GDH) will be an out-patient department only.

The Trust says that planning permission for the development of the QEMH site has not yet been applied for.

Agreement is also required for widening roads, re-routing bus services, and public access from the A2. Planning permis-

sion has not been granted by Greenwich nor contracts exchanged for Sainsbury's purchase of part of the Brook site.

Campaign

The campaign is asking for supporters to:

- Collect signatures until 14 February, and then return the petitions.
- Come to parliament on 18 February.

- Support a candlelit vigil from 7pm to 9pm on 17 February outside the GDH.

- Help organise an entertainment evening, probably in April prior to the local elections, to include speakers and information on the health service locally and nationally.

- Come to the campaign's next meeting, Wednesday 16 February, Kidbrooke House, Mycenae Road, London SE3, 7.30pm.

News in brief

Cost of privatisation

THE cost of privatising the Property Services Agency came to £17 million claims Labour, spokesman Derek Fatchett. He said the final bill could soar to £125 million. When the agency was sold last year the redundancy bill for 774 workers totalled almost £28 million, whereas proceeds from the sale raised only a little over £10 million, leaving a huge deficit.

Bribes escape

FORMER Ministry of Defence official Gordon Foxley who took £1.5 million in bribes from arms companies escaped sentence last week because of a heart condition.

Foxley is the retired director of the ministry's munitions pro-

urement department and suffered an angina attack last week. His counsel told Snarebrook Crown Court that the attack came after an 'incident'. But an order under the Contempt of Court Act bans publication of further details of the incident.

Foxley was convicted last November of 12 charges of corruption between 1979 and 1984. The jury was told that he had been paid huge backhanders while involved in awarding multi-million pound contracts to overseas companies for ammunition for the armed forces.

Sentencing was originally set for 10 December last year but was adjourned so that a full financial report of Foxley's assets could be completed.

Tribunal trap

OFFICIALS in Durham are refusing disabled people benefit because they have been able to attend tribunals to claim their rights.

Claimants with crippling

conditions face a '100 yard obstacle course' to get to disability appeal tribunals, say welfare rights officers. These officers say there are two perfectly good access doors 20 yards from the tribunal entrance, but they remained locked at all times.

But many who make it are turned away empty handed.

Jennifer Gregg, who suffers from the debilitating ME condition, lost her appeal for benefit despite evidence that she is forced to spend weeks at a time in bed.

The tribunal ruled: 'She had been able to walk into the tribunal building from the barrier and down the corridor to the tribunal room, which we estimated was approximately a distance of 100 yards.'

'Although she had to stop and take the weight off her foot if she was in pain, this was a momentary rest and she carried on walking.'

There is growing concern that Durham is not the only place access to appeal hearings is being made difficult to deter would-be appellants.

DTI official told to alter story

FORMER head of the Department of Trade and Industry's export licensing unit, Tony Steadman, told the Scott inquiry into arms sales to Iraq that he had to change court statements after conflicting instructions from lawyers.

In his original statement for the prosecution of machine tool firm Matrix Churchill he said that he had got information that the company was supplying Iraq's weapons factories.

Then the Treasury solicitor had told him that all references to the links should be struck out.

But in a subsequent statement the references were reinstated after lawyers had warned that secret documents might be released to the defence if the references to arms were not included.

Bristol Marxist Forum conference

Towards revolution: Socialist politics now

Saturday-Sunday 5-6 March

The Bristol Settlement, Ducie Road, Barton Hill, Bristol 5

Saturday — 1.30pm-5.30pm; Sunday — 10am-2pm

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Inside left

Wet rot

ORY newspapers, to whom the Iraqi regime's gassing of Kurds, and the suffering of Iraqi civilians under Allied bombs and sanctions, were of no interest, never mind front-page news, worked themselves into a frenzy about Labour MP George Galloway's meeting with Saddam Hussein.

Galloway should have said he was selling arms, like the Tories who regularly call on the Iraqi dictator. The Scottish TUC had asked Galloway to raise the issue of jailed Iraqi trades unionists. The Tory media wasn't interested. It approves of locking up socialists and trades unionists in Iraq, Indonesia, Turkey or, when chance offers, in Britain.

But Tory papers weren't the only ones in a lather. 'Socialist Organiser' claimed that 'the outcry, disgustingly hypocritical though it was, for once was justified' ('The left continues to rot', 27 January). Although 'Organiser' opposed the Gulf war and sanctions, it sounded like the 'Morning Star' itself: 'Galloway stood within smelting distance of the Iraqi dictator...'

Presenting Saddam with a pennant from Palestinian youth under Israeli occupation, Galloway said, in Arabic, 'Until victory; Until Jerusalem'. Perhaps he should have said 'Until Gaza and Jericho only'? But the pennant did show Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque!

Leave aside 'Socialist Organiser's' well-known position on Palestine. Attacking the 'moral, political and intellectual decay of the official left', it declared Galloway is unfit to be a Labour MP' and should be thrown out by his local party'.

When Iraq was under British rule, 70 years ago, Britain's first Labour government sent the RAF to bomb rebellious Kurds. In 1950, well-known 'Marxist' intellectual John Strachey became Labour's war minister, and sent Dyak headhunters to hunt Malayan Communist Party guerrillas. And we remember the brutal scenes when Harold Wilson's government let troops of the Argyll regiment loose in Aden's working-class quarter.

The bloody coup which brought Saddam's Ba'ath party to power in 1963 was welcomed by Labour 'left' Penner Brockway in 'Tribune'. Whatever 'Socialist Organiser's' particular reasons for resenting George Galloway, why pretend his performance with Saddam Hussein was any worse than Labour's long record of fawning before imperialism?

Mann's duty

SIXTY years ago, 'The Red Flag', Britain's first Trotskyist paper, carried an appeal by veteran communist Tom Mann and others against the jailing of Chen Du Siu, founder of the Chinese Communist Party, by the Nationalists. 'I count it my duty,' said Mann of the appeal; he had met Chen Du Siu at the Chinese party's congress in 1927.

But the Stalinist-run International Labour Defence organisation wouldn't help Chen Du Siu, who led the Chinese section of Trotsky's International Left Opposition. 'The Red Flag' noted: 'A copy of this appeal was sent to Harry Pollitt of the Communist Party and to A.G. Walkden of the TUC General Council. No reply has been received.'

You can obtain 'The Red Flag' now in two facsimile volumes, covering 1933-37, from Porcupine Books, at £5.95 each. They're not cheap, but if you want to study the history of our movement, well worth it.

Charlie Pottins

The proposal for a workers' aid convoy to the mining town of Tuzla in Bosnia was first made by RADE PAVLOVIC, a member of the Serbian section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International. Here he contributes an article about the role in the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), the organisation led by Ernest Mandel.

THERE are some comrades in the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League, the French section of USec) involved in Workers Aid for Bosnia who still do not understand why there was a split at the report-back meeting from the convoy to Tuzla, which was held in Manchester on 30 October. Their leaders, including Catherine Samaray, have simply told them that the Workers International wants, for its own narrow party interests, to manipulate this broad and united action.

When I asked what this manipulation consisted of they were unable to give a precise answer. In order to put a stop to this rumour — which smells of slander — it is necessary to bring a few questions to light.

From the summer of 1992, Olivia Meerson, János Borovi and myself — I was staying in France for a few months — did everything we could to mobilise support in defence of wounded Bosnia.

We gave active support to various associations, among them the 'Sarajevo Association' and wrote to many intellectuals, democrats, unions and left political organisations, mainly to the Trotskyists. Only the comrades of the LIT (the Workers International League, which is mainly based in Latin America) and the Ramos group (members of the organisation headed by the Spanish Revolutionary Workers Party) answered, and together we organised a small demonstration, under the banner of workers' solidarity, in front of the embassy of the former Yugoslavia.

No second thoughts

IT WAS only when the Workers Aid convoy left Dundee in September bound for Tuzla, after receiving considerable support from Bosnians living in Britain, that members of the USec, as well as others including anarcho-syndicalists, re-

formists, various non-party people as well as trades unionists, joined the campaign in numbers.

We naturally rejoiced at their joining because, as Marxists and Trotskyists, we hold the interests of our class, among which are the workers of Tuzla, above any narrow party interests.

We were so frankly and openly in favour of unity without the sort of second thoughts that characterise petty-bourgeois shopkeepers that we made mistakes at the start. That is to say, we allowed onto the convoy team a certain number of unstable elements, who went from exaltation, shouting 'victory' before Tuzla was reached, to demoralisation when new obstacles appeared along the route, and wanting to give in or abandon the

convoy. And among them the representatives of Tuzla in Zagreb, who know what they are talking about.

Unfortunately the leaders of USec think that, with their university degrees and recognition as famous journalists in the Western press, they are far superior to the Bosnians, who have acquired their experiences at the dearest price.

Proposals adopted

IN SPITE of being in a minority among the convoy members, the political platform of our party became *de facto* the platform of the convoy. Dot Gibson, whose self-sacrifice, enthusiasm and tenacity

“You want to build your party!” Should we sneer or get angry or pray to God for the soul of the bold Trotskyist who utters this reproach! Perhaps we should just patiently explain that we gathered together in the Workers International for this sole purpose.’

original purpose of the convoy.

At first they wanted to go through Serbia, a route that was absolutely unacceptable politically, and in practice impossible because of the absolute control of the route by the authorities in Belgrade and the gangs of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. Now they want to direct Workers Aid along the southern route, which goes via Split on the Adriatic coast and which has never been so impractical as it is today.

Yet the northern route from the Croatian border at Orasje is not an invention of the British or the Hungarian Trotskyists. Its opening is the obvious aim that flows from the serious political, military and geographical analysis made by the Bos-

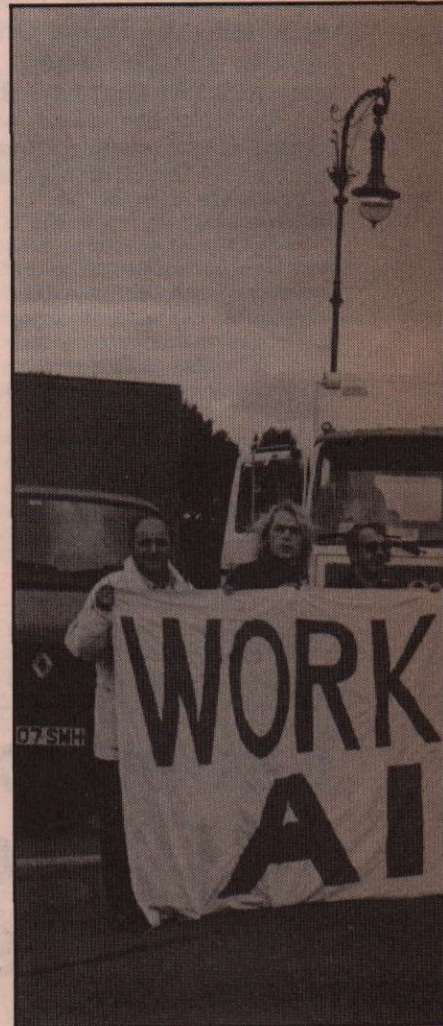
won everybody's approval, became *de facto* leader of the convoy. At each important point on the journey, her proposals were adopted by a majority by a show of hands. In Manchester the same thing happened, with all the Bosnians present voting in favour of her report. What more do our comrades ask for?

However, the essence of USec's politics then appeared in full light: it considers its own political interests to be above those of the working class, above workers' democracy. In the same way, in Orleans recently, in spite of our proposal to 'launch 200 lorries to break the encirclement of Tuzla' being warmly welcomed by the representatives of the French soli-



Workers Aid for Bosnia received great support in Britain. Here activists collect at a U2 concert in Leeds Photo: Rex Dunn

Th



Workers Aid convoy members at the B

solidarity groups with Bosnia, the USec members stubbornly maintained their idea of going via Split, the Neretva valley and central Bosnia, where a savage war is now raging.

Thus the political significance of Workers Aid, as far as USec leaders Samaray and Alan Thornett are concerned, is nothing other than in trying to wreck the promising future which was built on the first convoy; a future enriched by its experience and capable of increasing support in the European working class by ten times.

In fact, the USec criticise us specifically, although not always clearly and openly, on two grounds. First, they criticise us for distributing Workers Press openly in the campaign.

Secondly, they criticise us for wanting to build our party in the course of the campaign. I clearly heard this said by Catherine Samaray and a comrade of hers responsible for the LCR's industrial work, at a meeting of Workers Aid in Paris. This was at a time when the convoy was up against it in Orasje.

The warmest defender

I WAS taken aback to hear such a thing from an active Trotskyist, by definition a revolutionary.

In spite of my lack of knowledge of the English language, I have been so proud of Workers Press that I have been showing it to everybody, even forcing people who speak less English than I do to have a good look at it.

It caused me real pain, in Serbia, to receive only one out of ten

The urgent need in Bosnia



Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, last year. At the convoy's London report-back meeting a split occurred Photo: Anthony Myers

issues. It has become the best Trotskyist paper in the world and is being read, dictionary in hand, from Santiago to Vladivostok and Johannesburg. Its heart has been beating only for Bosnia for more than a year, which doesn't mean that everything else should be left out.

The warmest defender of a united and multi-ethnic Bosnia, it is the only paper with the moral authority and political conviction to say to Bosnian workers:

'Merciless war together with the Bosnian army on Boban and Karadzic's fascist gangs, but no trust in [Bosnian president] Alija Izetbegovic and his party. Workers of Bosnia, do not put any trust in any national party, nor in the politically crippled veterans of the old regime (the party of Mikulic and now of Durakovic); trust your own party, an independent workers' party that must be built to save Bosnia. As the Bosnian proverb says: "Trust only yourself and your donkey."'

And the USec comrades propose to ban that paper from the route to Tuzla, a paper that breathes for the Bosnian working class from the first page to the last? What a joke!

'You want to build your party! Should we sneer or get angry or pray to God for the soul of the bold Trotskyist who utters this reproach! Perhaps we should just patiently explain that we gathered together in the Workers International for this sole purpose.'

General confusion and chaos

WE WERE forced to have a separate international organisation be-

cause the USec leaders never wanted a Trotskyist workers' party in eastern Europe, particularly at a time when great class confrontations have arrived and the workers have urgent need of such a party to guide them in the general confusion and chaos.

This urgency is present in Bosnia and throughout the former Yugoslavia because the re-emerging national bureaucracies and, above all, the state police apparatus have evolved from advancing a war of chauvinist propaganda to

planned to involve the mutual destruction of towns and people, because the authorities in Belgrade and Zagreb would not otherwise be able to survive for more than a few months, facing as they do — in different ways and at different tempos — a serious threat from the workers at their backs.

These authorities aim at the hideous destruction and dismemberment of Bosnia under the watchword: 'Grab what land you can!' They bargain cynically at Geneva, but soon there will be nothing but

'This is a war of systematic destruction waged by Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, and Croatia's president, Franjo Tudjman; but with the open or tacit support of their masters, the great powers, which — once the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians are flattened, struck to the heart by bombs, starvation and disease — will be the sole victors.'

a genuine one aimed at exterminating the working class as a class.

These governments conscript workers by force to throw them wholesale at each other's throats. At the same time they boost the fascist gangs made up of lumpen, declassed and criminal elements.

The gangs are armed, controlled and paid by these governments to kill women and children, to burn down towns and villages, to carry out the 'ethnic cleansing' of 'their' territories, and to plunder and rape without any restraint.

This dirty war was consciously

empty land, bereft of towns, villages, means of communication and even forest, and above all the men and women to rebuild anything.

This is a war of systematic destruction waged by Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, and Croatia's president, Franjo Tudjman; but with the open or tacit support of their masters, the great powers, which — once the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians are flattened, struck to the heart by bombs, starvation and disease — will be the sole victors.

The individual fate of the war-

lords — whether as victorious servants licking the boots of their foreign masters while their people are ruined, or dropped because they are too compromised, or even hanged as war criminals — is secondary in the Yugoslav tragedy as it sinks further into barbarism.

Chase out the fascist gangs

WE SAY that there is only one way for a positive outcome: the revolutionary unity of the workers — Serbians, Croats, Muslims, Albanians, Macedonians — throughout the former Yugoslavia, to chase out the fascist gangs and bring down the semi-fascist powers of Belgrade and Zagreb, in order, in the first instance, to save the workers' own lives and the lives of their families.

Then it will be time, after peace, to see what kind of federation, or confederation we shall set up and with whom, how we shall proceed to the reconstruction of the country, etc. . . .

But the first things are to stop the war which is being dragged on by the Geneva negotiations, to bring down the nationalist powers, and to put the working class in power, together with the honest intellectuals, peaceful peasants and enthusiastic youth.

To achieve these we fight for an independent workers' party, the only one capable of political clear-mindedness, cool-headedness, organisational discipline, firmness, all things which are more necessary than bread to the Serb, Croatian and Muslim workers.

Whether this party wishes to join the Workers International, the men and women who have built it and who lead it shall decide for themselves. For us the salvation of Bosnia stands miles above petty political considerations, which are the specific concern of petty-bourgeois shopkeepers.

In brief, members of the USec reproach us for doing what is the most important thing today, more important than the relatively small number of trucks that we can bring to Bosnia.

Because with trucks of food, we can only lighten the sufferings of the war. With speeches of international solidarity we bring moral comfort to the Bosnian workers, isolated and abandoned by everyone. But with the programme of the Fourth International we open up the way to victory over fascism.

We have said this loud and clear in our work for the convoy and we shall repeat it in the course of further convoys. No Workers Aid activist, whether they joined the campaign for religious, humanitarian, or cultural reasons, has reproached us for this . . . except the 'Trotskyists' of the USec.

Lastly, the very experience of the Bosnian working class, and its lessons, calls for such a party.

In the year preceding the war half a million workers came out in Sarajevo shouting 'Down with the

bureaucracy, down with nationalism!' All the parties in parliament, without exception, got frightened by the workers.

They neither wanted to or were able to oppose the workers. And it wasn't necessary. For the workers, without their own political party, were not able to go further.

Their last attempt — when they marched on Sarajevo on 5 April 1992 — to dissolve the impotent parliament and take over the power in their hands, was turned away at 4 o'clock in the morning by none other than Durakovic, chief of the former party of the 'Communist' bureaucracy. He persuaded the 50,000 miners of Tuzla not to march on Sarajevo. 'To save lives!' he said.

A few months ago, in an interview in the Belgrade paper 'Borb', Durakovic was again congratulating himself; he currently lives in Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, and has serious hopes of having a leading role in the future of Bosnia.

Learn from bitter experience

TODAY it is necessary to learn from this bitter experience and to arm the Bosnian workers with a reliable tool, to bring to an end a situation where the working class is being led by leaders thrown up by chance during the turmoil of events.

Some of these leaders are brave and honest like the Serbian and Croatian officers fighting in the ranks of the Bosnia-Herzegovina army — Jovan Divjak, a Serbian, and Stjepan, a Croat, are symbols of this bravery.

But there is also a whole bunch of incapable, undecided, suspicious individuals among which thousands of little Fikret Abdics are hiding and who, in the even harder times to come, will desert one after the other.

No, if the Bosnian workers do not themselves install as their leaders the best figures — honest, brave, politically able, firm and united amongst themselves — no miracle can be expected.

Izetbegovic has sunk up to his neck in the mud of Geneva. He has falsely told his people that 'the Western world will come to your help'; but now he is left either with capitulation or the signing of an unfair and intolerable treaty, or with a long exhausting war that cannot be won, because Bosnia is materially worn out.

Or he may be faced with suicide because of his inability to take a decision. We have always given our support to Izetbegovic against Boban and Karadzic, but we cannot and we do not want to endorse a wrong policy; we do not want the Bosnian workers to remain helpless and unprepared, waiting for an impossible miracle.

And this is what the United Secretariat is reproaching us for: you want to build your party, they say! But of course we do, you bet we do!

John Fordun

Several Scottish chroniclers write

CHRISTOPHER Smout is an English-born historian who was, for many years, Professor of Scottish History at St Andrews University. He was recently appointed Historiographer Royal for Scotland.

More eyebrows, I am glad to say, were raised about the arcane and archaic nature of the post, than about Her Majesty's preference of a Cambridge man to advise her on the troubled past of her northern kingdom.

Hardly the stuff of a Workers Press column, I hear you mutter. Yet regular readers may recall Bozena Langley's praise for the monarch's new History Man in a letter she wrote to the paper published on 4 December last year.

Langley was welcoming a previous letter — from that unequivocally Scottish historian Jim Young — which raised 'the question of male chauvinism in the working-class movement'.

That is a matter to which Workers Press correspondents may want to return. But I refer to Langley's letter here because she went on to say that she was 'glad to see [Young] making a distinction between Scottish and English working-class women . . . and not using the amalgamated word "British" working class.'

She had recently read Smout's 'A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950', (sic!), and found it 'like a breath of fresh air.'

'It made me aware', she wrote, 'how distinct Scottish people are.'

'[T]heir strong traditions of democracy and socialism were deep-rooted and stemmed . . . from the [ir] living and working conditions and . . . from the religious and educational traditions cultivating these qualities.'

Now those of us with some up-to-date experience of Scottish religion and education may take a little convincing that they automatically promote democratic and socialist convictions.

Indeed, it might be nearer the mark to misquote that great English radical, Tom Paine, and say that democracy will not come to Scotland before the last Presbyterian minister is strangled with the guts of the last bureaucrat from the Scottish Office Education Department.

But Bozena Langley was stressing a different point. In the idea that working people may express their striving for social justice in religious and cultural forms, she saw an echo of 'Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg, who was one of the few not afraid to write about religion without a hint of contempt, which she only reserved for institutionalised churches.'

She might also have referred to Lenin who visited London churches in order to get a feel for the culture shaping the local working class. Or Marx, who, unlike most of those who have quoted him subsequently, completed his remark about religion being 'the opium of the people' with the corollary that 'it is the sigh of the oppressed masses'.

Langley continued her appeal for more attention to be paid to cultural sensitivities by saying that she was unhappy with reports of the 'Timex to Tuzla Workers' Aid convoy as having been organised by 'the British working class'.

'Workers Press itself', she wrote, 'never said that approximately half the volunteers on the convoy were Scots . . .'

She then went back to the initial theme of her letter. 'From the pictures of the con-

voy printed in the paper it would appear that hardly any women took part.

'But . . . at least five' did. 'Yet another example of capitulation to British male chauvinism!' Langley concluded.

A harsh judgement! But, in its linking of 'British' identity with 'male chauvinism', one that should provoke further discussion . . . Don't you think?

* * * * *

IN REPORTING future convoys Workers Press will, I expect, take some of this criticism on board. And the more readers know about the background and personality of the participants, the more we are likely to identify not only with the political principles they are fighting for but also with the reality of their experiences.

George Angus's narrative of his 'Kafkaesque odyssey' from Stuttgart to Zagreb with the Christmas convoy (Workers Press, 22 January) was a case in point. And I recently had a personal account from Andy MacFarlane — a Dundee man who has been with Workers Aid since the first convoy left the gates of the Timex factory in early August — of how he and his comrades spent Hogmanay in Zagreb.

Nothing ever defeats a Dundonian, and, as MacFarlane explained, it wasn't that he couldn't master the steps and the arm movements in the traditional dances of the exiled Bosnians present. It was just that he found it difficult to get them in the right order!

I don't know what was going on in Dundee while its Workers Aid man was tripping over the light fantastic in Croatia, but in Edinburgh's Princes Street gardens some of the first sounds of the New Year came from the cello of exiled Bosnian musician, Vedran Smailovic, who was participating in an open-air Hogmanay concert.

* * * * *

I PROMISED an explanation of why this column — vacated temporarily by its regular occupant, Peter Fryer — is appearing under the name John Fordun.

It is not that I do not want you to know that I am Terry Brotherstone, who can be contacted at the University of Aberdeen, Department of History, Old Aberdeen, AB9 2UB.

Fryer's column is unique in Workers Press — and, I think, in the left press generally. Its author is who he is — the reporter whose dispatches from Budapest at the time of the Soviet invasion in 1956 were suppressed by the editor of the Communist Party's 'Daily Worker', and whose subsequent campaign to get the Party to tell the truth played an important role in the 1957 split, which afforded the first opportunity for a major political breakthrough for Trotskyism in Britain.

Even if Fryer did want to assert that the moon is made of green cheese (one opinion he is definitely on record as not holding) it would be a matter of some interest — and of course the case would be entertainingly made, with not a semi-colon out of place. Few columnists have such a place in history.

Hence the need for Fryer's stand-in to put a little distance between writer and reader: to speak, as it were, through a third person. I have resurrected John Fordun, a fourteenth-century Scottish chronicler, perhaps because I spend some of my time trying to be a late twentieth-century one.

But John Fordun, I assure you, was never Historiographer Royal, and this latter-day purloiner of his name won't be, either!

TB

Television

Grasping our own history

Review by Nick Lee

I HAVE always thought of Visconti's film of 'The Leopard' (30 January, BBC2) as a sort of Sicilian 'Gone With the Wind', a saga of the aristocratic Falconeri family, led by Burt Lancaster as the Prince, weathering the storms of the Italian Risorgimento of 1860.

The most famous line in the original novel by Giuseppe de Lampedusa is spoken by the Prince's young nephew (Alain Delon) as he announces his departure to join Garibaldi: *Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come e, bisogna che tutto cambi.* — If we want things to remain the same they have to change.

In this atrociously dubbed English version of the film such a brilliant summation of the dilemma of the Sicilian aristocracy faced with the bourgeois revolution on the mainland of Italy came across with all the force and poignancy of an episode of the Archers.

Greatness

Despite this the greatness of Visconti's epic managed to show through.

Class positions and class interests were clearly stated and discussed without ever degenerating from art into propaganda, as when the Prince sees off the feeble bourgeois emissary from Milan who tries to persuade him to sit in the upper House of the new Italian parliament.

The present situation in Italy gave the film a new pertinence.

How is the Holocaust to be remembered? In 'Tango of Slaves' (31 January, Channel 4) the Israeli Ilan Ziv took his father back to Warsaw to dis-

cover that little remains of the ghetto and few people living in the city now remember those terrible days.

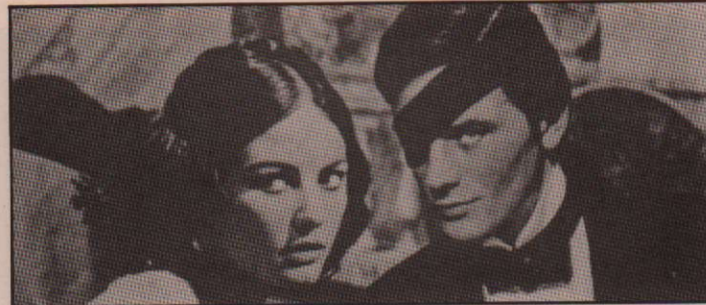
'So there's no reality to your memories?' he asks his father. 'No, nothing.'

Ziv discovers that photos of the ghetto have now become part of the international art

officials committed barbaric murder with the same detachment as they might undertake any routine administrative task.

It is this 'rationality' of the Holocaust which is surely the greatest barrier to our grasping it as part of our own history.

By contrast, Emily Bucha-



Claudia Cardinale (left) and Alain Delon in 'The Leopard'.

market and that one of the few remaining documentaries about life in the ghetto is a Nazi propaganda film.

In a sense the Warsaw ghetto and the uprising does survive as historical memory because it involved social and political elements with which we are quite familiar.

The death camps themselves and the murder of six million Jews are harder to remember precisely because of their utter 'normality'.

They did not take the form of a pogrom, they were not the work of gangs of thugs in the night engaged in 'ethnic cleansing' but of the cold efficiency of a Nazi bureaucratic machine in which professional doctors and

nan's documentary for ASSIGNMENT: 'The Disposables' (1 February, BBC2), dealt with the work of hired gunmen in Colombia, paid by middle class residents, hoteliers and shopkeepers, for the job of 'social cleansing', or the removal of beggars and the homeless from the city centres and shopping areas by killing them.

At times the documentary seemed to rationalise these murders — in Bogota 20 death squads, including some police kill on average 12 people per week — as the understandable reactions of a middle class under siege from a breakdown in law and order.

It was made clear though that these 'disposable persons'

include gay people and others labelled as deviants who are being killed not only to protect middle class property from robbers and muggers but as part of a lucrative trade in body parts for medical students.

Again I felt that the documentary at times came close to giving the impression that the problem was that the 'deserving poor' were getting shot as well as the muggers, though I doubt this was the intention.

Alternatives

Nevertheless here was a glimpse of the future facing cities throughout the capitalist world as the alternatives between socialism and barbarism become ever more starkly posed.

Finally, to a subject I find absolutely fascinating — computer hacking. WALK ON THE WILD SIDE: 'Hackers and Phreakers' (2 February, Channel 4) mainly showed teenage computer junkies — Cyberpunks — riding around the world computer networks and gaining illegal access to various parts of the 'Secret State'.

We were treated to shots of Fort Knox and Pentagon computers being successfully accessed and there were a few hushed references to credit card fraud and some shots of hard porn downloaded from bulletin boards.

Footage of a recent Hackers conference in the Netherlands with tee shirts bearing the slogan 'Watching them watching us' was the nearest the programme came to any political engagement with the issues.

Programme guide

Saturday 12 February ARENA: 'The Dark Side of Black'. Isaac Julien confronts the new stars of ragga and gangster rap about the alleged misogyny, homophobia and violence of their music (9pm, BBC2).

Sunday 13 February MOVING PICTURES. Coinciding with the release of Stephen Spielberg's 'Schindler's List', Jewish film-makers talk about Hollywood and the Holocaust (8.55pm, BBC2).

Tuesday 15 February NETWORK FIRST: 'Children of the Holocaust'. A million and a half Jewish children were murdered by the Nazis and their Fascist allies. Only seven per cent of Jewish children survived. This documentary tells the story of four of them (10.40pm, ITV).

Wednesday 16 February EAST: 'Nowhere to Run'. A report on the rising numbers of young Asian women fleeing

from arranged marriages and parental restrictions (7.30pm, BBC2). DISPATCHES: A look at how the same men repeatedly get away with rape and how rapists who know their victims use this fact to construct de-



Lynchburg asylum exposed in Secret History, Thurs, C4

fences (9pm, Channel 4). **Thursday 17 February** SECRET HISTORY: 'The Lynchburg Story'. In the 1920s, the science of eugenics — compulsory sterilisation of 'imbeciles and social misfits' was actually put into practice in Virginia, USA, in the country's largest asylum (9pm, Channel 4).

Selected films

THE RISE AND FALL OF LEGS DIAMOND (1960). Outstanding camerawork distinguishes this old-style gangster movie about 1920s racketeer (Saturday, 12.15pm, BBC2). **THE MYSTERY OF PICASSO** (1956). Remarkable collaboration between the artist and Henri-Georges Clouzot who filmed Picasso discussing and creating work especially for the camera (Friday, 12.25am, BBC2).

JJ

The rich get richer and the poor . . .

BY PETER JEFFRIES

THE unemployed and single-parent families have been hardest hit by changes in taxation since 1985. At the same time the super-rich have got steadily richer.

These are among the findings of the Institute of Fiscal Studies in the most comprehensive study of the impact of changes in taxation carried out in recent years.

The changes are largely the result of the switch from taxes on income to taxes on spending, together with the reduction in the marginal rate of taxation from 60 per cent to 40 that was made in the budget of 1988.

As IFS researcher Chris Giles said: 'Cutting income tax

benefitted the top one per cent of tax payers.

The poor will be especially hit by the increased VAT rate and its extension to domestic fuel. Hardest hit of all are unemployed couples with children, whose incomes will have shrunk by 2.7 per cent since 1985.

Study

The IFS study reveals that such families have not been adequately compensated by the Tories' package of assistance that was announced last November.

Tax cuts for high earners have boosted the incomes of the rich by almost 6 per cent on average, while the poorest households face a loss on average of 3 per cent.

Only 1 in 14 poor families

have gained anything from the changes introduced by the Thatcher and Major governments, while two in three of such families have been losers.

The report's findings were given added significance with the news that John Cahill, British Aerospace chairman would receive a near £10 million payout following the sale of Rover cars to BMW.

And none of this analysis takes into account the rich's widespread practice of tax-avoidance schemes — principally through the use of 'tax havens' abroad.

The report in last week's Workers Press of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International's second congress and executive meeting (pp. 4 and 5) is to be continued next week.



Rapper Ice-T, author of 'Cop Killer'. Violence in gangster rap is considered in 'Dark Side of Black', Saturday, C4

City Lights

Doubly unfortunate

MICHAEL PORTILLO's reactionary outburst last week against 'the corruption of foreigners' was doubly unfortunate. Not only did the chief secretary to the Treasury plunge the Tory Party into an even bigger mess, but his remarks came shortly after the revelation of widespread corruption at the heart of the British state machine.

Only days before Portillo's gaffe in front of students at Southampton university, the Comptroller and Auditor-General — the head of the National Audit Office, the watchdog on government finances — said there was waste and corruption in Whitehall on an unprecedented scale. What is more, this corruption is the direct result of the government's so-called war against bureaucracy, which has involved the wholesale introduction of outside business consultants and the setting up of semi-autonomous agencies.

In a period of sweeping change it was not surprising that 'people see the scope for dishonesty', said Sir John Bourn in evidence before the Commons Treasury select committee.

As Bourn was calling for a return to 'traditional ways of handling public money', two senior health authority officials were standing trial accused of having set up a holiday slush fund that had stolen £400,000 from the National Health Service over a period of four years.

Money supposedly being spent on computer equipment for the Wessex regional health authority was used for holidays in Turkey, Egypt and America for the men and their families, a court was told.

The court heard that the opportunity for fraud arose from government policies on privatising services within the NHS, and it went undetected because of the administrative failing of the Wessex authority.

This corruption is not some aberration for capitalism. Indeed, one sure index of its decay is the extent to which it increasingly relies on such methods and the extent to which they appear nakedly on the very surface of economic and political life.

A notable anniversary

A FRIEND recently pointed out to me that this year marks the 150th anniversary of Engels's 'Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844'.

Strictly speaking, the book was written in 1844 and 1845, when Engels had reached the ripe old age of 24, and was first published in Germany in the latter year.

It appeared at the height of the industrial revolution that was making Britain the workshop of the world and the country of classical capitalism.

Originally conceived as a study of the social history of England, with a single chapter on the condition of the working class, the work soon became exclusively concerned with this latter topic.

Engels based his book on 'personal observation and authentic sources' which he gathered in Manchester and many other towns in the north of England; but he also drew heavily on literary authorities that included Thomas Carlyle and Andrew Ure, as well as official reports of parliamentary commissions and factory inspectors.

Above all, Engels valued direct evidence obtained from workers about their lives. The book is dedicated 'To the working-classes of Great Britain',

and Engels says: 'I wanted more than a mere abstract knowledge of my subject. I wanted to see you in your own homes, to observe you in your everyday life, to chat with you on your condition and grievances, to witness your struggles against the social and political power of your oppressors.'

'I forsook the company, and the dinner-parties, the portwine and champagne of the middle classes, and devoted my leisure hours almost exclusively to intercourse with plain Working-Men.'

The work is a model of revolutionary scholarship. Engels's investigations were meticulous and described in minute detail the life and struggles of many sections of the British working class — spinners, weavers, tailors and dressmakers, miners and farm labourers.

A chapter, 'The Great Towns', dealt with the life and mores of the country's rapidly expanding industrial centres, where the most class-conscious workers tended to be concentrated and Chartism had its main base.

Engels described the plight of the workers, showing the widespread nature of forced labour, under-nourishment and poverty, and the erosion of their physical and moral strength. As Lenin said: 'Neither before 1845 nor after has there appeared so striking and truthful a picture of the misery of the working class.'

Writing to Marx, Engels said: 'I accuse the English bourgeoisie before the entire world of murder, robbery and all sorts of other crimes on a mass scale, and am writing an English preface which I shall have printed separately and shall send to the English party leaders, literary men and Members of Parliament.'

But he also had the German bourgeoisie in his sights:

'These fellows will have to remember me. Anyhow it is understood that when I hit the bag I mean to strike the donkey, namely the German bourgeoisie, of whom I say clearly enough that it is just as bad as the English, only not so courageous, consistent and adept in sweat-shop methods.'

IN THIS classic work, Engels reveals the extent to which he understood the role of the economic factor in history, that is understood history materialistically. Engels proved the inevitability of a social revolution once 'the proletariat perceives how easily the existing power may be overthrown'.

In the latter half of the 18th century substantive changes began in the technology and technique of industrial production. The mechanical loom, the steam engine, and many other machines were invented and put to use. The productivity of labour rose dramatically. But for Engels the main result of the industrial revolution lay in the emergence of a new class, the industrial working class, whose condition was the point of departure for all social movements.

The work deserves a thorough re-evaluation in the light of capitalist development over the past 150 years and the experiences of the working class in England and internationally.

In reminding me of the anniversary of Engels's work, my friend also suggested that this might be an appropriate time to publish a short book on 'The Condition of the Working Class in Britain in 1994'. This would look at standards of living, housing conditions, poverty, housing, etc.

Some preliminary investigations about the feasibility of such a project are underway. Anybody with ideas or offers of help should contact me urgently.

Threadneedle

Prepare for 26 March all-European Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy SUPPORT GROWING

WORKERS AID groups throughout Europe are gearing up for the next convoy to Bosnia, which will leave from Zupanja to travel along the northern route to the mining town of Tuzla on 26 March. This date has been fixed to give as much time as possible to organise the convoy throughout Europe.

■ Supporters in Spain are hoping to put two lorries on the road.

■ In France, the Workers Aid committee in Paris will be holding a public meeting on 18 February. The committee has been approached by many organisations and a decision will be taken soon about how many lorries they will provide for the March convoy.

■ In Slovenia supporters are working to get backing from trades unionists. Franc Druk, president of the Miners' and Power Workers' Union in Ses-

tanj, is doing everything he can to help the convoy. Later this month he will attend a meeting of powerworkers in Italy and will seek support for the March convoy.

■ In Holland an organisation called Citizens for Citizens has been formed to bring together all bodies trying to help Bosnia. They held a conference in Stuttgart at the end of last month, where they first heard of Workers Aid, and already have ten trucks ready to leave.

Full

A representative from Citizens for Citizens attended the meeting of the Workers Aid steering committee held in Leicester on 5 February and gave full support to the convoy.

■ In Germany, Workers Aid committees in Stuttgart and Heidelberg have contacted ex-

isting aid organisations, Bosnian clubs and trades unions. A 500-strong meeting was held in Mannheim, attended by representatives of the Bosnia-Herzegovina government. The Bosnian club in Mannheim is giving full support for the convoy.

■ Adverts have been placed in several newspapers in Sweden and various aid organisations have pledged support for the convoy.

■ A group of Bosnian refugees in Denmark has just contacted Workers Aid and wants to collect aid for the convoy.

■ Shop stewards from various factories in Belgium are hoping to put a lorry on the convoy.

■ In Britain Workers Aid committees in several cities are

winning a big response from supermarket shoppers. A growing number of trades unionists are donating money. Two trade union newspapers have reported Workers Aid activities and this has already produced volunteers to drive to Tuzla and offers of help in collecting the necessary funds.

■ In Portugal, a group of students in Lisbon has set up a committee, and friends in Greece are beginning to collect money and hope to be represented on the March convoy.

■ For further information about the March convoy please ring Bob Myers, secretary of Workers Aid for Bosnia, on 061-226 0404.

This report is based on the second Workers Aid for Bosnia 'Bulletin'.

Death is our reality

DEATH from starvation and the winter, and the many suicides owing to psychological pressure, exhaustion, poverty and hunger are daily reality in the town and region of Tuzla.

This interview is with Mr Beslagic, Mayor of Tuzla, by the Croatian journalist Franjo Bosanac. It was originally published in 'Danas' (No. 56, 1 February 1994).

WHAT are the relations between Muslims and Croats in the Tuzla region? What influence did they have on the merging of the [Croatian] 115th HVO 'Zrinski' Brigade under the Bosnia-Herzegovina command?

In spite of all the misfortunes, every citizen of Tuzla and the Tuzla region is determined to resist fascism and continue with the fight for freedom. The presidential decision to merge the HVO units under Bosnia-Herzegovina's command has tested people's loyalty. Once again they have demonstrated their high political awareness.

The commander of the 2nd Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina army offered the HVO that he would keep the name of the 115th Brigade, and simply remove the HVO emblem. It was pointed out that only a change of form was requested. However, representatives of the Croatian military came and did not accept this offer.

They decided to disband the 115th Brigade and end its two-year fighting glory. Even though it could remain a Croatian brigade, some troublemakers went round the Croatian villages spreading lies, saying that it was the 2nd Corps which was demanding separation.

For a while the Croatian people became frightened and worried, but this was groundless. The Tuzla military and political officials visited Croatian communities explaining that this was a presidential decision.

Afterwards the situation was stabilised. The former HVO soldiers are joining the Bosnia-Herzegovina army in large numbers.

WHAT about humanitarian aid coming to Tuzla and the Tuzla region?

The Tuzla region has been blockaded for over ten months. In the first two weeks of this year the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) carried out none of its promises. That

was a disastrous blow for the approximately 236,000 refugees and displaced persons, and the 209,000 people who depend on social services.

These people were left without any aid, as were the other 423,000 residents of Tuzla. The ten-month blockade has exhausted everybody.

UNHCR takes care only of refugees and those who depend on social services. But the total aid delivered in January amounted to 750 grammes per person per week.

People are dying of hunger, cold, and of complications arising from minor illnesses, alongside the enormous rise in the suicide rate. Exhaustion, poverty and hunger are becoming our reality.

ARE there any chances of overcoming such a disastrous situation?

The only possibility is to open the airport at Dubrave (Tuzla) for humanitarian aid deliveries. After all these months under the blockade it has become evident that the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) is not capable of providing free and safe passage for humanitarian convoys.

The airlift is the only way to deliver aid to the needy. We are aware of the two-faced international humanitarianism, we know that aid to the hungry and exhausted people is the means of political pressure on the Bosnian delegation in Geneva.

Recent statements about the possible opening of Tuzla airport show that those with consciences can no longer tolerate this situation, that international voices are being raised against this blackmailing policy of the Serbian aggressors.

It awakens our hopes that the UN security council may at last act on its resolutions.

HOW do you react to the stand of the international community to the problems faced by Tuzla?

We are not worried about the international and European communities tolerating the crimes of the neo-communist-fascist regime in Serbia. We believe that everybody will get what they deserve.

The most important thing for us is that the people of this region are aware of the direction they have decided to go. They will never recognise the dark as their lighthouse.

(English translation by Faruk Ibrahimovic.)



A member of Workers Aid's first convoy is presented with contributions from the Timex strikers in Dundee last year

SPECIAL OFFER — EXPIRES END FEB. 1994

'REVOLUTIONARIES THEY COULDN'T BREAK' BY N.VAN

The fight for the Fourth International in Indo-China

WHEN published in early 1994 this 220 page book will cost about £15. Advance subscribers are offered it for £10. Fill in the form below.

Trotskyist opponents — not, as Stalinist mythology pretended, because the latter 'turned their backs on the peasantry' or 'sold themselves to Japanese fascism'.

This book sets straight the historical record after generations of falsification.

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* * * * *

Ngo Van was a worker, a Trotskyist and a participant in the events he describes. He was imprisoned in the 1930s by the French colonial regime, and in 1945 escaped the Stalinist massacre.

He fled Vietnam to Europe, where he lives in exile. He combined first-hand experience with years of documentary research to write this book, which is a must for revolutionary fighters of today.

The book and its author

The Vietnamese workers' movement took shape in mortal conflict with the French colonial regime before World War II.

It suffered defeat in 1945, caught between French attempts to reassert control on one side, and an alliance of the Communist party and reactionary nationalists on the other.

A decisive part was played in the workers' movement by the Vietnamese supporters of Leon Trotsky.

As the official Communist Party — under Stalin's instructions — carried out ever-more-ruinous zig-zags of policy, the Trotskyists discredited and defeated them in the workers' organisations.

The Vietnamese Communist Party enforced its power in 1945 by a brutal slaughter of its

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ARMS-DEAL TORIES AND IMPRISONED BANKER

DID Britain's longest-serving remand prisoner have secrets that could upset the Tory government and its allies in Malaysia? Were business interests linked to former prime minister Thatcher's friends the real beneficiaries of an overseas aid scheme?

Malaysian banker Lorrain Osman was held in Brixton prison for seven years, awaiting extradition to Hong Kong in connection with an attempt to defraud the Bank Bumiputra.

Now his name has come up in the row over £234 million of British taxpayers' money which went to fund the controversial Pergau dam project in Malaysia, allegedly in return for the Malaysian government agreeing a £1 billion arms deal.

Malaysian opposition MPs say their government agreed to buy British-built Tornado-fighters, artillery, submarines and missiles, because it was worried documents might be released in the Osman case, implicating leading politicians in financial scandal.

Two former Tory ministers, Francis Maud and Lord Caithness, are facing questions about 'public interest' immunity certificates they signed in 1990 and 1992, preventing release of 150 telexes between London and Kuala Lumpur about the Osman case.

The permanent secretary at Britain's Overseas Development Administration (ODA), Sir Tim Lankester, refused to approve funding for the Pergau dam, saying it would be 'a bad buy in economic terms and a burden on Malaysian consumers'.

Lankester also warned that any link between ODA funds and arms deals would be an 'abuse of the aid process'.

He was angered to find himself overruled after Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd had spoken to Prime Minister John Major. Hurd has denied any link between the Pergau aid and arms deals.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had met Malaysian prime minister Mohathir Mohamad, who agreed on the £1 billion arms deal in 1988.

Mohamad's former foreign minister Rais Yatim said the arms deal and aid money were 'undeniably linked'.

Former British Defence Secretary Lord Younger, who went to Malaysia in 1988 and 1989 to secure the deal, says the Malay-

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

sians insisted there would be no deal without the aid project: 'A verbal undertaking was given by somebody — not myself — to link the aid to the defence contract.'

Labour MP Alan Williams last week tabled a motion noting the 'striking coincidence' that two of Thatcher's top advisers had since acquired connections with companies benefitting from the Pergau deal, whose cost has almost doubled.

Sir Charles Powell stayed on as a foreign affairs adviser at Downing Street until 26 March 1991, five months after Thatcher's fall, so was on hand when Major took the final decision on Pergau, in February that year. He is now a non-executive director of Trafalgar House and Hong Kong Land, two companies benefitting from the dam project and the military deal.

Military

Trafalgar is one of the main contractors on the £417 million Pergau project and has conducted a £1 million feasibility study for a military training area, Project Gemas, under the weapons agreement.

If the Malaysian government goes ahead with the project, Trafalgar hopes to win a £200 million contract for it.

Sir Tim Bell, Thatcher's public relations consultant when she was prime minister, is a consultant now to Trafalgar House and to the head of GEC's Malaysian subsidiary.

GEC is supplying the turbines for the Pergau dam and has won two big arms contracts in Malaysia. One of these arms contracts, together with British Aerospace, is worth £323 million. Britain's former High Commissioner to Malaysia, Sir Nicholas Spreckley, appears to have contradicted Foreign Secretary Hurd's denials.

Spreckley, likely to be called before the Commons foreign affairs select committee next month, says the arms deal protocol signed in 1988 included a specific reference to British aid.



'Popular capitalism' in the Czech Republic. Profit-seekers in Prague queuing up for share-coupons issued by gangsters

ANC backs Zulu king

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS deputy secretary-general Jacob Zuma, who is standing for the premiership of Natal, has backed a demand by King Goodwill Zwelithini of the Zulus to become king of the entire province.

King Goodwill, nephew of right-wing Inkatha party leader Chief Buthelezi, discussed his claims as a constitutional monarch with President de Klerk recently, demanding that his 'kingdom of KwaZulu' should include the present KwaZulu 'homeland' plus Natal.

Uncle

The king has been largely dependent on a royal purse provided by his uncle. Chief Buthelezi is chief minister of the

Zulu 'homeland', as well as leader of Inkatha, which was originally formed with ANC encouragement, but whose followers have been waging armed war on ANC supporters and others.

Backed by right-wing businessmen abroad, Inkatha is now allied with white racists opposed to majority rule.

'We would like to see the entire area that used to be the kingdom of the Zulus under the

jurisdiction of the King,' said the ANC's Zuma, adding that the kingdom should not just include the 'patches created by apartheid'. Natal is to have provincial legislature after the 25 April general election.

'Brits behind township killings'

A SELF-claimed former employee of America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) says British agents were behind some of the violence in South Africa's black townships.

New Zealander Paul Bennet told the High Court in London last week that while he was acting as a 'taxi-driver' for the CIA in South Africa, he and his superior came across British

agents distributing AK47 assault rifles to 'members of the public' near Durban.

Soon after this, he heard of people being killed in various places. 'Maybe the British government was knowingly involved in black township violence so as to maintain the white government's position, because of the ties that Great Britain had,' Bennet said.

31-year-old Bennet is seeking a judicial review of a magistrate's decision on 22 May 1993 to commit him for trial at Southwark Crown Court. He was arrested by South African police in January 1991, and flown back to Britain at the request of Scotland Yard.

He says the authorities had no cause to do this, and that he was 'kidnapped'.

Russia's 'shock therapy' brings poverty

THE RUSSIAN Academy of Sciences has delivered a damning condemnation of the effects of the 'shock therapy' reforms demanded by imperialism and carried out by Yeltsin's government.

The report reveals that one-third of the population is below the poverty line, with one-tenth — some 15 million people — earning below starvation wages.

The average family spends

between 60 and 70 per cent of its income on food, while pensioners spend 83 per cent and the third below the poverty level 90 per cent. In 1990 food bills represented 30 per cent of average incomes.

The death rate has leapt by a staggering 35 per cent between 1992 and 1993, from 1.6 million to 2.1 million as a direct result of poverty. Life expectancy fell from 69.2 years to 66 years, and infant mortality rose from 17.4 per 1,000 births to 19.1.

The wealthiest 10 per cent are now ten times as rich as the poorest 10 per cent, a recipe for social conflict, the report concludes.

In the last two years production has fallen by 30 per cent, with new investment 60 per cent

down. Trade with former Soviet republics has collapsed, with exports to them down 38 per cent, and gas 72 per cent.

The report attacked price 'liberalisation', which had proved a disaster for industry and consumer alike.

Having delivered such a devastating report to parliament the authors were unable to provide a solution.

They are for a mixed economy where the state supports key sectors such as agriculture, transport, and oil and gas production in order to avert a total collapse.

But it's only the working class taking state power that can end the capitalist anarchy into which the country has been thrown.

Sex slaves from Burma

THE government of Thailand is turning a blind eye to the traffic in women and children brought from Myanmar (Burma) to Thailand for forced prostitution. This is the charge made in a report from the US human rights organisation Asia Watch.

According to the report 'A Modern Form of Slavery', village girls are lured to Thailand by the promise of jobs as maids, cooks and laundry workers, often with a cash payment for their parents.

Once inside Thailand the women are thrown into brothels and beaten if they refuse to serve clients. Many have contracted HIV.

The strict border controls that, in theory, exist between

Thailand and Myanmar are evaded by corrupt police on both sides, says Asia Watch.

Despite 'clear evidence of direct official involvement in every stage of the trafficking process' Asia Watch says that as far as it is aware no Thai official has been prosecuted, except in one highly publicised case of murder.

It is reckoned that some 20,000 women from Myanmar are at present in Thai brothels, with 10,000 'recruits' each year. It is estimated that there may be as many as 2 million prostitutes in the country.

In 1992 the government promised it would crack down on child prostitution but so far nothing has been done.

Demonstrate against Britain's appeasement of genocide in Bosnia

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