

The town 'felt so alone, so isolated' WORKERS AID IN TUZLA!

WE ARRIVED limping into Tuzla. We reached this, the working-class capital of Bosnia, on a moonlit night. What a way to see a country! The road goes over the top of mountains, not in the valleys. It is so breathtakingly beautiful.

If only from the point of view of wear and tear on vehicles and nerves we must step up the campaign for the opening of the northern route!

We had a meeting in the town hall with the mayor and various people in the leadership of the struggle here and a meeting with the press. It was very good.

The mayor says he wants to meet Rade Pavlovic, the member of the Workers International Rebuild the Fourth International who first proposed that a convoy try to reach Tuzla.

There is no doubt that the radio reports from Faruk Ibrahimovic have had a big effect. The three trucks that came in November are also remembered with great affection.

Right

We have met the person who sits between the 2nd Corps of Bosnia-Herzegovina army and the United Nations Protection Force.

He said that what we were saying was exactly right — about the UN, about the Izetbegovic government, about Tuzla and the northern route, but above all about the need to restore the internationalism of the working class.

He was so pleased that he says he wants to tell the people on the television. It may be that he will appear on Saturday, but not then next time we come.

We will soon meet the ministers, and also visit the hospital. At our first meeting the mayor

From DOT GIBSON
in TUZLA

said: 'With people like this we must sit down to a proper discussion and round the table.'

He read some things in Workers Press and said that they were 'exactly what we should have been saying'.

They were very excited that this was so. 'We have felt so alone, so isolated,' he said.

'We have been pleased with Faruk's radio reports showing that you have been working for us — that there were some people who really did care, not just to give aid but to fight for our independence alongside us.'

When I said that it was Rade Pavlovic who proposed the convoy and who said Muslims must be defended the mayor, Selim Beslagic, interrupted to say: 'We must meet this man.'

Accord

Everything we have said about the UN's control, its need to isolate this leadership, is true and known to be true by this leadership.

They also know that the accord between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia is an agreement to divide the country, but also that it was forced on the Croats by the military succes-

ses of the Bosnia-Herzegovina army. They have held on through the whole winter.

They needed some respite. The people are hungry, tired, and stressed.

But what spirit! What determination, and what a tried and tested leadership! They are proud, humane, without arrogance and it is clear that Beslagic has kept them as a united group throughout.

They are delighted with the idea of bringing trade union banners and with getting a leaflet produced. We will fix this up.

We will show them that there is a greater force than the UN with all its high-powered equipment, trucks, tanks, etc. — the working class.

■ We urge all trade union organisations, other working-class bodies and community groups and campaigns to send messages of solidarity to Selim Beslagic, mayor of Tuzla, and the trades unionists of Tuzla. Messages can be faxed to the Tuzla Logistic Centre in Zagreb: 010-385-41-317938.

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International
Advanced notice
Memorial Meeting

Tom Kemp
1921-1993

Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1

Friday 3 June
7.30pm



WE invite all Tom Kemp's comrades, family and colleagues to join in commemorating the life of an outstanding Marxist, a dedicated teacher and a fearless fighter for the working class and the rebuilding of the Fourth International.
Speakers to be announced.

Russians in control of town's airport

THE first fixed-wing United Nations plane landed at Tuzla airport last week, following the landing of Tory minister Linda Chalker.

A Russian plane, carrying 100 military and civilian personnel and a large press corps, was the first fixed-wing plane to land at Tuzla airport. It arrived days after Chalker was flown in by helicopter.

The only aid the Russian plane managed to take in was a miserly 20 tons of flour and soap. On landing it was immediately searched by Russian troops.

In other words the airport remains under the control of Russia, Serbia's closest ally.

SIXTY Labour MPs have

now signed a motion supporting the fight of Workers Aid to open the northern route into Tuzla.

Campaign

Their early day motion reads: 'That this house commends Workers Aid for Bosnia for its campaign to open the northern route to Tuzla and central Bosnia for aid-convoys; urges the government to use all its influence to help in that campaign and to support the international convoy of Workers Aid assembling at Zupanja on 26 March . . . and expresses its deep alarm that the obvious short route into northern Bosnia has not been utilised by the United Nations authorities.'



PART of the 50,000-strong march against racism and fascism in east London last weekend. The march was called on the initiative of the Tower Hamlets trades council but its organisation was taken over by the TUC. The trades council was refused a speaker on the platform of the meeting following the march. See editorial — page 2.

Photo: Alan Clark

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US cover-up on Bosnia, back page

Workers Press

'Democracy' and the fight against fascism

LAST weekend the Tory press was screaming about the TUC's lack of 'democracy' because it refused to give a place to the Liberals or the Tories on the platform at the rally after the east London march against racism and fascism.

Yet the Tory press has no real difference with the TUC leaders about the question of 'democracy'.

It is clear that the TUC wanted Liberal Party leader Paddy Ashdown on the post-march platform. Speaking on the radio prior to the demonstration, Transport and General Workers' Union leader Bill Morris regretted 'Paddy's' absence. He was absent, Morris admitted, only because of 'strong feeling' in east London.

Yet Tony Blair, the Labour frontbencher on home affairs, *did* speak at the rally following the march. What a sham! Both the TUC and the Labour leaders are at one with Ashdown and the Tories in accepting the anti-union laws. And they have done nothing to mobilise an effective fight against the racist immigration and asylum acts.

They thus connive with the Tories in trying to cripple the only force, the working class, that can organise and act to challenge the system that produces unemployment and the whole social crisis from which fascism and racism spring.

* * * * *

LAST autumn, in an open letter to the TUC, Cliff Slaughter, WRP secretary, wrote as follows (Workers Press 4 September 1993):

'We should not mince words. It is an absolute disgrace, to be condemned without reservation, that the TUC . . . has done nothing to organise material and political solidarity with the Bosnian people, and that this elementary working-class task has had to be taken up by socialists and trades unionists in Britain who started with little or no resources.'

We wrote this because the struggle against ethnic cleansing in Bosnia stands at the very centre of the fight against racism and fascism. As a member of the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign shouted on last Saturday's demonstration: 'Concrete action against racism and fascism — Workers Aid convoy to Bosnia!'

The very week before the march, the TUC renewed its call for a 'partnership' with the Tories and the employers. How is it possible to fight fascism under a pact with the Tories?

* * * * *

The thousands of trades unionists who took part in the march will have to fight *against* the TUC if the struggle against fascism is to go forward an inch.

If they don't, then the millions of young people who are unemployed will turn against the unions. Trade unionism can only be saved and the employed united with the unemployed if there is a fight against the TUC, and that means, in the vast majority of cases, against their own union leaders.

It is better to start this fight *now* before the return of a Labour government, so that the need to *oppose* such a government is well-learned before the event, learned in time.

Let's consider 'democracy' and the fight against fascism concretely. Let's say that the BNP fascists win two further seats in east London's Isle of Dogs area in the forthcoming local council elections, following last September's victory. And that members of the local government union, UNISON, take strike action, refusing to carry out BNP policy. The anti-union laws will then be invoked.

Of one thing we can be sure: the Labour Party leaders and the TUC will join hands with the Tories in denouncing this 'breach of democracy', this violation of the 'rights of the majority of the electorate'!

Letters

What is really happening in Algeria?

MILLIONS of people are suffering in Algeria, millions of people cannot survive any more in Algeria.

Millions of workers are silenced, subjected to the economic reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund. Thousands of women are humiliated, suffocated and forced through terror to transform themselves into blind and silent mummies [i.e. purdah].

Thousands of men and women are savagely assassinated, slaughtered and beheaded in what seems to be the resurgence of barbaric and satanic rites from the darkest ages of humanity.

State

The military Algerian state appears unable, and perhaps unwilling, to protect the average citizen. Rather, it prefers to negotiate with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

The military junta is therefore having intensive secret talks with Islamist fascist leaders aimed at reaching agreement on power-sharing.

Furthermore, Algeria has become a privileged battlefield

The following call for workers' solidarity was sent to us by an Algerian reader of the Workers Press. We welcome correspondence on the issues raised

for the control of north Africa and the Mediterranean south front.

On the one hand, many clues point to Iranian, Saudi, French and American secret service involvement in a shadowy war over control of the fascist Islamist terror.

On the other hand, the Algerian state and the army, weakened by internal divisions due mostly to the abnormal aspect of the corrupted class they represent, seem to be preparing the ground to adapt themselves to an Islamic fascist society.

It is important here to state that no representative member of the ruling class has been harmed by the terrorist violence. No member of the former ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) and no important army figure has been killed by the Islamist armed groups.

The exceptions perhaps are some young, progressive officers, who could have become a threat to the older generation,

and thousands of expendable police.

It is clear then that the real target of barbaric fascist terrorism is the democratic concept of citizenship, which implies a free worker, a free woman and a free consciousness.

Rights

Furthermore the so-called democratic Europe, land of human rights, is killing every hope for the possible escape of targeted Algerians.

A point in case: the French authorities are no longer giving visas to Algerian citizens with no 'official' business in France. In fact, the French consulate in Algiers is closed to natives.

However, the average fascist Islamist militant can easily fly to Europe (mainly to Germany) as a political 'refugee' and reinforce the international Islamist organisations.

In Algeria the workers are shouting: Where is the international class solidarity?

Is the workers' movement so weak that it has become unable to handle more than one international issue at a time?

Are our comrades in Europe and elsewhere fully aware of what a fascist Islamist state in North Africa controlled by international capitalism would mean?

Let's ask the right questions: is the 'new world order', conceived by American imperialism, a fascist order based on free exchange and workers' bloody exploitation?

Are we on the eve of an era of huge pacification inspired by that successfully tried in South America in the 1970s?

Where are you comrades? It is about time we responded on a world scale!

Let's react to defend the Algerian worker and the Algerian woman who want to live a fair and normal daily life. Let us react for the repressed young Algerian girl, for the artist who wants to express the will of the people, and for many more.

■ Let's act and fight against fascism and slavery.

■ Let's act for a free and democratic Algeria.

An Algerian Reader

'Rouge' and bête noire

IN AN otherwise interesting John Fordun column on Derek Jarman Terry Brotherstone makes a rather puzzling concluding comment. He suggests that a study of Jarman might help to raise the issue of the relationship between gays and socialism.

Well perhaps it is not quite 'come back Peter Fryer all is forgiven' but where has Brotherstone been for the last 20 years? From the 1970s, with the magazine 'Gay Left', the relationship between sexuality, oppression and lesbian and gay liberation has been an issue. 'Gay Left' got fed up with the Labour Party and restyled itself 'Rouge', a magazine which is still flourishing. In the meantime lesbians and gays supported the miners in 1984-85 and got their support over Clause 28 in

the late 1980s. More recently the bigoted actions of 39 Labour MPs in failing to vote for an equal age of consent at 16 has sparked off a considerable row about whether or not lesbians and gays can rely on Labour and a fresh round of stunts by the direct action group OutRage.

If Workers Press is, at long last, going to address some of these issues then that will be very welcome. But please don't assume that much useful work has not already been done.

Also, why does Charlie Pottins keep banging on about Roger Roseballs? When Roseballs first revealed that he had changed sides, by authoring an Aims of Industry report, 'Socialist Worker' published a front-page denunciation written by Ian Birchall under the heading 'The Worm That Turned'.

Since (although I don't read the 'Daily Mail') I don't think Roseballs claims that his present work is in any way influ-

enced by his time in the International Socialists (forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party) it does seem rather odd that Pottins should keep demanding that 'Socialist Worker' denounce him afresh. Of course a weekly column denouncing various renegades from the left has a certain appeal.

But I think Pottins would have to agree that this would do little to help the building of socialist organisation which I thought was meant to be the task in hand!

Keith Flett
London N17

Constructive criticism?

YOU HAVE yet again got your facts wrong about the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). This is not the first time you have printed misinformation about the

organisation. I refer to Phil Edwards's article (12 March).

Instead of defending the ARA from your pointless argument I prefer to ask what you are doing to fight racism?

It's easy to print arguments about what others are doing or should be doing.

We all know that to end racism we need to rid ourselves of capitalism and for the international working class to be united, but that takes time. What are you doing now?

I'm just surprised that you didn't call the organisation Stalinist — as you do to almost everyone else you don't agree with. The paper at times reads like a scandal sheet, always slugging someone off, from the Redgraves to the TUC, Anti-Nazi League, Socialist Workers Party, ARA, African National Congress, etc. Constructive criticism yes, but not this please.

Lorraine Mitchell
Greenwich and Bexley ARA

WORKERS PRESS £3,000 MONTHLY FIGHTING FUND

IN SO FAR: £1,380.00

PERUSING the proofs of the 'Letters' this week, I notice that some people are asking 'what are you doing now' to end racism? Just as the writer of this letter is 'surprised', I could reply the same in return.

We are often critical in this paper of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy — and revisionists who masquerade as 'Marxists' — but I would have thought that anyone who reads Workers Press, even only for one week, would not be under the impression that is all we do.

Workers Press is suffering a continual lack of resources because of our commitment to the Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy to Tuzla in Bosnia, which our Serbian comrade Rade called for last year. We do not complain because we see that this work is fighting the rise of fascism at its sharpest point — against the ethnic cleansing of fascist forces in the Balkans. We stand for the right of those in the former Yugoslavia who want to live a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic life.

Of course, because of our vision of the socialist future and the need to build the working-class movement to realise it, our work always goes beyond our apparent resources and minor and some major miracles are performed weekly to keep this paper going. But since the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign was formed our work has become increasingly concrete, especially now that we have news of what life is like in the mining town of Tuzla, and the effect our work has had on the people there.

We have also made important steps forward in uniting workers of other eastern European countries — from Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, and I am confident there will be others in the months to come — with those in the West. We can be justly proud of what we have done, and particularly our comrade Dot Gibson who has led the work.

It has become increasingly clear that we lack not only financial but human resources. I would therefore appeal to people who have been hesitating to join the party to fill in the form opposite on page 3, or phone in, because we need your help now to fill many gaps.

It's only in this way that the financial problems will be solved, with people in the party building a working-class-conscious leadership that transcends the party we have at present. But to do that we have to start. Join now, get others to contribute physically and financially to build the basis of socialism that will overcome the rotten capitalist system that we live in today.

Mike Cooke

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

Coming soon

TUESDAY 29 MARCH: Picket of Thames Magistrates Court for Tower Hamlets 6. Bow Road, 9.30am.

WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH: 'The Challenge of Creationism', last of a series of lectures by Mike Howgate MSC. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. 6.30pm-8.30pm. Admission is £1 and the nearest tube is Holborn.

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Workers Press was sad to hear of the death of Timothy Henderson, the son of one of our regular contributors, Paul Henderson. Our sympathy goes out to Paul and his family at this time.

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**Portillo's
tales come
home to
Wales**

JUST over a month after Tory chief Treasury secretary Michael Portillo's attack on 'corrupt foreigners' allegedly selling academic qualifications, Italian and Welsh fraud squad officers are investigating allegations that British university degrees were sold to students in Italy.

Retired judge Norman Francis is examining links between the University of Wales' Cardiff Business School and the European Business School in Parma. Cardiff West Labour MP Rhodri Morgan claims witnesses are afraid to come forward, and has called for a 'proper judicial inquiry'.

Morgan says universities are desperate to earn money. Within months of the University of Wales agreeing last year to validate Parma's business studies degree, the Italian college was reported to have debts of almost £2.5 million, and sacked many academics.

The 'entrepreneurial spirit' entering British universities has been attacked by the Campaign for Academic Freedom and Standards, formed after Swansea lecturers won a victimisation case following their criticisms of exam standards. A spokesperson said if the Cardiff allegations were true 'it will only prove what we fear is happening on many campuses'.

Scandals

Amid ongoing scandals about arms deals, overseas contracts, and Tory councils' misuse of house sales, Tory leadership-contender Portillo drew astonished gasps and some laughter by telling students at Southampton University last month that Britain was the most honest country in the world.

'Outside this country the standards of public life are way below what goes in this country. If any of you in this room has an A-level it is because you have worked to get it. Go to any other country and when you have got an A-level you have bought it or because you were a friend of the minister.'

He went on: 'When you go into business you will win contracts because you are good at what you do. Go to a number of other countries and you win contracts because your cousin was a minister or because you have lined the pocket of some public official.' Social security secretary Peter Lilley followed up Portillo with an attack on alleged 'benefit tourists'.

Reaction overseas to Portillo's remarks varied between indignation and derision. Within hours of his speech he apologised. In Britain it was noted that the Tory minister didn't mention contracts won because your company hired top civil servants, nor highly-paid consultancies gained when your mother was prime minister.

Portillo's foreigner-bashing performance came after the Public Accounts Committee reported falling standards in public service with private business ethics, and as polls showed mounting public hostility over government sleaze. The Treasury chief attacked people who, he claimed, set out to destroy 'our institutions'.

Release asylum prisoners!

PROTESTS are mounting at the holding of nearly 700 asylum seekers in jails and detention centres across Britain whilst their claims to refugee status are assessed.

At present 170 of the prisoners in various centres are on hunger strike in protest at their conditions. Amnesty International is one of several human rights groups which has voiced concern at their treatment.

Even if there is clear evidence of previous torture in the country of origin, asylum-seekers are held under prison conditions pending review of their cases.

Mohammed Sekkoum, of the Algerian Community Association, which has campaigned against the deportation and detention of refugees, explained that in the case of economic refugees you had to ask who was responsible for the economic conditions that they were fleeing. It was, he said, Western powers.

'When our countries were colonised', he said, 'we did not ask them for visas.' He said the main demand must be that the Western powers stop supporting the dictatorships that these refugees are fleeing.

He called for an end to the criminalising of asylum-seekers, saying that the majority of ordinary British people are against this maltreatment of refugees.

Sekkoum complained of his treatment on the 15 March edition of 'Kilroy', where, having got up at 5am with his children, he was not called to speak at all!

Five Algerian asylum-seekers are being held in Exeter prison, which has previously held Kurdish refugees. Monday 14 March saw a picket staged at the prison by the local Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) group in protest at their continuing detention.

Demands

Dave Parks of Exeter AFA told Workers Press that the 'demonstration demands that they should not be held in prison. The protest is to demand their release.'

The demonstrators also expressed concern that whilst in jail the five were not even interviewed in their first language. Interviews are conducted in

BY PAUL DAY
AND GEOFF BARR

French rather than Arabic. Parks explained that the demonstration was also in solidarity with the hunger strikers.

He drew particular attention to the 200 people held at Campsfield House detention centre at Kidlington, Oxfordshire, 82 of whom are on hunger strike.

Allegations

Campsfield House is run by the private security firm Group 4. It was at the centre of allegations of maltreatment of detained Jamaican holiday-makers before Christmas.

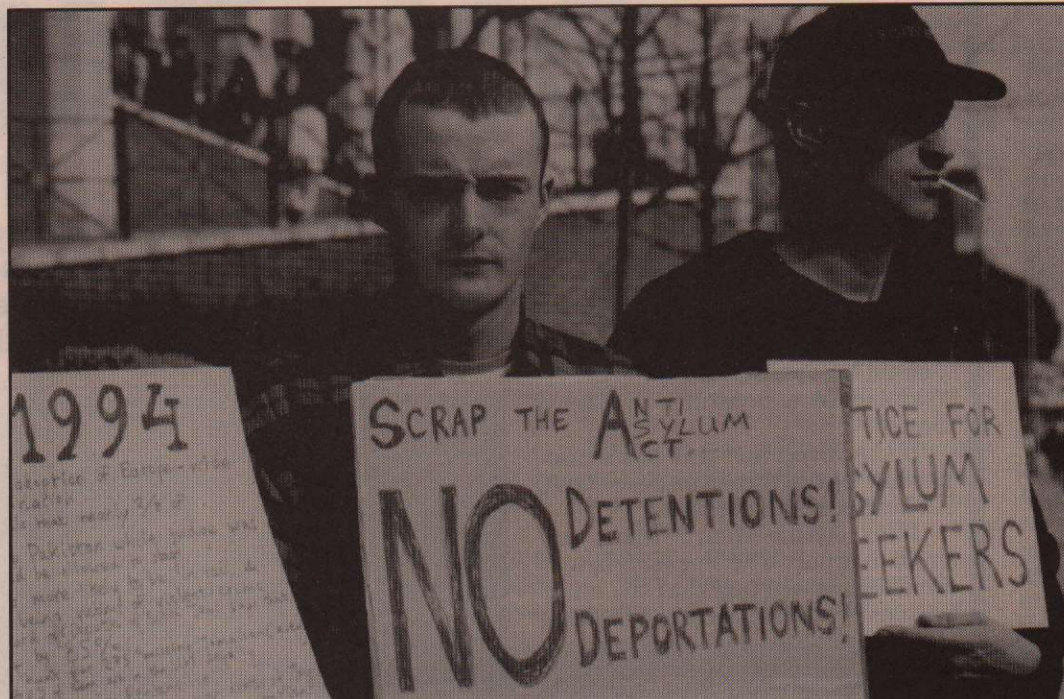
A leaflet by Exeter AFA explains the links between state violence against refugees and fascist violence on the streets. It asks: 'Why are the authorities putting so much effort into chasing "illegals"? The answer again lies in racism.'

'The logic is that Black people are the cause of racism (and hence fascism) and thus the fewer Blacks there are the less of a problem there will be with racism. This is of course, an official sanctioning of racism.'

'The truth of the matter is that there are presently as many deaths in Britain at the hands of the Immigration authorities as there are at the hands of the fascist gangs; and the one encourages the other.'

The leaflet demands: the release of the detainees; an end to treating refugees as criminals; an end to deportations; and the scrapping of the racist immigration and asylum laws.

- See letter on Algeria — page 2.
- There is a picket of the Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1, 12 noon-3pm, on Monday 28 March. Nearest tube St James's Park.



Demonstration against imprisonment of asylum-seekers, outside Exeter prison

Part-time explosion

BY TOM BATTERSBY

'A SWEATSHOP at home' is how home computer work is described by Drs Leslie Haddon and Roger Silverstone of the University of Sussex.

In the first of two reports published this week, which shed grim light on the true meaning of the much-trumpeted falls in unemployment, they show how for many of the estimated 2 million home computer workers in Britain long hours and low pay provide their only 'reward' for participating in economic 'recovery'.

Meanwhile the Low Pay Network, which links all the provincial Low Pay Units, describes with some nice understatement as 'alarming' findings which indicate that within ten years nearly half of all jobs will be part-time.

Judging by a small sample study conducted in Stirling, which concentrated on supermarket vacancies, the poverty implied by this trend is quite staggering. Of the 91 jobs on offer, one-third paid less than £30 per week.

The average wage was a princely £39 for 11.4 hours work

per week. The Network further notes that given the top-up benefit such workers would claim and their lack of National Insurance contributions, 'pressures on public spending could become ever more acute'. In other words, even more cuts in the welfare state.

The Economic and Social Research Council, funders of the Sussex work, has discovered that 'teleworkers', who word-process from home, were in effect piece-workers, offering services to printers and other businesses such as type-setting at below union rates.

One Mansfield company was estimated to save around £3,000 per employee by this practice.

Promoted

Dr Haddon believes that the trend is 'permitted not promoted' by firms. However for the many people in this booming industry forced to take up such freelance cottage labour because of redundancy or the desperate need for second salaries this will be cold comfort.

As employment figures for March to September last year show a continued fall of over 100,000 in the full-time job market and a rise of over 200,000 in

the part-time equivalent, the quest for a living wage looks set to get ever harder.

■ The Labour Party had another of its famous about-turn announcements about part-time employment.

Labour employment spokesperson John Prescott said that a Labour government COULD make employers pay National Insurance contributions for part-time work as for full-time work.

But shadow chancellor Gordon Brown said: 'It's not policy. We've not said anything and we don't intend to.'

So even the suggestion of discouraging part-time work is too much for Brown. The bosses immediately weighed in for Brown.

An Institute of Directors spokesperson said: 'If you raise the cost it is clearly going to reduce the number of part-time jobs. Part-time work suits many workers and employers.'

'Suits' is not the correct word, if part-time work is all you can find.

But even Prescott's idea doesn't stand scrutiny. National Insurance is the tax that hits lower pay just above the threshold.

Bomb threat to Child Support Agency

BOMBS could be the next threat faced by staff implementing the hated Child Support Act which robs millions of pounds from children and parents.

Child Support Agency workers have already received hate mail in the form of razor blades and condoms at their six regional HQs.

Postal staff at the Midlands office are protected by security officers. More are to be drafted in at all the offices with expertise in bomb alert techniques because of growing fears of attack.

The CSA demands massively increased maintenance payments from separated fathers, putting pressure on children either from non-payment of the money, which is subtracted from benefits, or increased tensions between estranged parents.

The act gives no more money to children — and often less where a parent refuses to pay. So either children lose money or one of the parents. The act has been accused of responsibility for more than four suicides.

The CSA's chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite, maintains that the act is not to blame.

'I really do not think the agency is to blame. These sort of tragic events happened before the CSA. It could be a wide range of reasons why someone takes their own life.'

At the very least it must be said that the act can't help people already under pressure.

Hepplewhite did admit the act could make life difficult: 'There are many men, many with second families, who are having to make very tough decisions as a result of the Child Support Agency. We do need to

tread very carefully.'

Last year, 'welfare counselors' dealt with 12,000 CSA cases. The number is expected to increase greatly. There has been a wave of transfer requests and stress complaints.

Workers Aid for Bosnia
Benefit gig
Richmond pub
 Richmond Place, Brighton
8pm-12midnight
Thursday 31 March
Three local bands
 Entrance £3

And
Concert
Chapel Royal
 North Street, Brighton
7.30pm, Wednesday 20 April
Rose Chalmondeley, Paul
Gregory, Aida Gavrilova,
Patricia Romero and others
 play Mozart, Chopin, Debussy,
 Ravel, etc.
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Inside left

Last weekend

WORKERS unity to smash fascists', Workers Press urged last week. Linking racist attacks in east London, fascist 'ethnic cleansing' in ex-Yugoslavia, and capitalist decay worldwide, Trotskyist and Tower Hamlets trade unionist Phil Edwards said Labour and trade union leaders provided no answers; the working class needed to unite on a socialist programme.

'Together we can beat the racists', 'Socialist Worker' assured us. It conceded grudgingly that thousands of trades unionists marching through east London was 'excellent'; 'But one demonstration is not enough' ('What we think', 'Socialist Worker' 19 March).

With the British National Party standing in forthcoming council elections, 'everyone opposed to the Nazis must be out with leaflets, stickers, posters and arguments to expose them for what they are,' it urged. 'We need mass mobilisations to stop the Nazis' — note that ubiquitous, undefined, 'we'.

For more advanced readers, 'Socialist Worker' had another thought: 'It is not enough to just fight the Nazis. We have to fight the system that breeds them.' Noting the Bradford university study linking the growth of racist attacks and unemployment, it urged 'united struggles against the Tories and the bosses'. 'It is so dangerous for Labour and trade union leaders to hold those struggles back.'

Why unemployed youth, some from Labour families, had been drawn to skinhead racism rather than 'left' protest, wasn't asked. Nor were workers' struggles against former 'left' Labour councils mentioned. 'Socialist Worker's' call for 'ending capitalism' remains abstract, separate from today's need to unite 'everyone opposed to the Nazis' — the popular-front policy of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL).

'Unite the anti-racist campaigns,' urged 'Socialist Organiser'. 'Defeat the BNP! Vote Labour on 5 May!' Calling on campaigners to 'turn to the labour movement', but meaning 'stay with the Labour Party', it complained that the ANL and Anti-Racist Action (ARA) confined themselves to urging an 'anti-Nazi vote', rather than urging workers to vote Labour.

'Union power can SMASH THE RACISTS!' declared 'Militant'. It reported lively action by Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE). But its 'What we think' was on 'What the TUC should do'. It urged 'simple leaflets' to 'expose what the British National Party (BNP) and other fascist groups really stand for'; workplace meetings; and unions to 'organise community defence'.

Like it did to support the miners, printworkers, and dockers? The TUC leaders' failure to defend jobs or union rights, including the right to hold workplace meetings, was passed over. As was its preference for talking to Tory ministers, rather than workers.

Caged cats

CAN the leopard change its spots? Though no longer buried in the Labour Party, 'Militant' remains trapped in 'left' reformism. Its venture into black militancy, 'Panther UK', has broken away. And while YRE boasts French and German sections, 'Militant's' statement, 'What we stand for', says nothing on international issues.

Echoing 'Militant's' entrism dogma, South African co-thinkers used to claim to be an African National Congress (ANC) 'Marxist' faction (as though it would tolerate such a thing!). Now 'Militant' just advocates backing the ANC, because 'workers support it'. Just what they used to say about Labour!

Charlie Pottins

Historical roots the wars in ex-Yugoslavia

THE first centralised Yugoslav state was capitalist and Serb-dominated. The second was a genuine federation. The Yugoslav revolution led to the creation of a distorted workers' state as the Russian 1917 revolution led to the establishment of a deformed workers' state.

If the revolution was not socialist, how should it then be described? As bourgeois-democratic?

Does Attila Hoare have any proof that post-war Yugoslavia was Serb-dominated and that the other nations were suppressed? I think the facts indicate the opposite.

The 1974 federal constitution — before 1968 the Albanians were suppressed — granted great autonomy to all the republics.

The autonomous provinces — Kosovo and Vojvodina within the Republic of Serbia — were represented at the federation as the republics were. The collective presidency was composed of eight members — deputies from Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo.

In the chamber — dealing with all important matters — decisions had to be unanimous. All eight delegations had the right of veto.

The republics and the autonomous provinces had flags and separate parliaments. Laws voted through by the Belgrade parliament — except ones about the police and armed forces — had to be ratified by those of Novi Sad (Vojvodina) and Pristina (Kosovo) before they could be implemented.

At Pristina university all subjects were taught in Serbian and Albanian. In what capitalist country do the national minorities have so many rights?

Tackle

How do you think the national problem should be solved? How would a Trotskyist party in power have solved it?

I hold the view that it is not a very simple and easy task to eliminate problems that have existed for a long time, and to tackle instantly or in a few years the deep-rooted mistrust between nationalities inherited from the past.

After 1952, workers' management was introduced in Yugoslavia and the results in terms of economic performance were remarkable. The annual rate of growth of gross national product was around 9 per cent.

Enterprises were granted autonomy at the decision-making level and, unlike the other countries of 'real socialism', there was a motive for the producers.

It is obvious that the market mechanisms cannot be totally eliminated after the takeover of power by the workers in any state.

After 1965, market-orientated reforms were initiated. The effort to liberalise the economy — Yugoslavia became a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and

The following discussion article on the former Yugoslavia from PANOS, who lives in Athens, is a reply to some of the issues raised by Attila Hoare ('Letters', 19 February), who was answering Panos's earlier letter (5 February). Panos is critical of some of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International's positions on ex-Yugoslavia



Bosnian refugees from the war: events in ex-Yugoslavia were influenced by developments in the rest of eastern Europe

Trade, for example — brought some years of slow growth and increasing inflation.

The development slowed down, despite the fact that there was much emigration. The aggregate efficiency of the economy was reduced. All the enterprises turned to sectors with a high ratio of output to capital, hoping to maximise their profits and causing surplus potential.

The competition between enterprises increased corruption and broke the spirit of solidarity between the workers of different factories, which competed for markets.

The gap between the advanced areas — Slovenia, Croatia, and Vojvodina — and the others increased, despite money being poured in from the Federal Fund. There was also an increase in regional differences within republics.

This situation increased the conflicts over the distribution of the national cake.

In 1971 the mass movement in

Croatia appeared. Croat nationalists asked for separate representation at the United Nations, democracy, the right of enterprises to be self-financing — that is, to submit a lesser proportion of their export revenues to the federal government.

The oil crisis and the consequent indebtedness of the 1970s sent Yugoslavia into turmoil.

Agreed

The self-management system proved to be inefficient and the leaders of all republics agreed on its abolition. The Slovenes proposed an asymmetrical federation: a loose association between the republics in the style of the European Community, reduction of the contributions to the Federal Fund for the assistance of underdeveloped areas, while preserving a common currency.

Serbia, in opposition, insisted on a strong federation — abolishing the right of veto, eliminating the the rights of the autonomous

provinces. It also opposed further liberalisation of the economy advocated by the federal government of Ante Markovic (1988-91). Serbia argued that these measures would hurt it the most severely.

Markovic's government applied an anti-inflationary stabilisation programme agreed with the International Monetary Fund and dismantled the legal framework underpinning self-management. The more loss-making enterprises, which would have to be declared bankrupt and liquidated, were in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and in Serbia proper. It should be added that the Serbian nationalists — at the end of the 1980s Serbian leader Milosevic promoted a racist-type anti-Albanian campaign — joined into alliance with the Yugoslav centralists. In 1990 the League of Communists broke officially into its national components.

I have tried as briefly as possible to present the historical roots of the situation that has led to the current wars. I do not hold the view imputed to me by Hoare that the

s of a

Film review

Slicing apart life in Los Angeles

REX DUNN looks at Robert Altman's latest film, 'Short Cuts'

ROBERT ALTMAN is one of the last great *auteurs* of film. So respected is he, Hollywood is even prepared to fund his unusual projects.

Whereas 'The Player' (1992) satirised Hollywood itself, his latest film, 'Short Cuts', currently on general release, is a tragic-comedy about today's Los Angelinos; at least a section of them, since all the main characters are white, whereas now the majority of LA's citizens are not!

Loosely based on Raymond Carver's East Coast short stories, 'Short Cuts' weaves together the lives of eight 'couples', including a mother and her daughter.

Altman always shows great understanding of his characters, even compassion, although some of them are quite unlovable. Over three hours long, this film is not over-indulgent.

In style and structure, if not in content, it resembles 'Nashville', perhaps one of his greatest films. Many of his films, and especially this one, are thematically linked, in the sense that Altman has a very jaundiced view of 'the home of the brave and the land of the free'. This is his strength. In his own way he turns his back on capitalism, and creates in spite of it.

Injustice, even for the well-to-do, alienation, and despair, even fatalism, pervade the film. This is reinforced by some stunning photography and a melancholic soundtrack (Schubert and jazz blues).

The music is closely related to

'The characters — or most of them — seem to be mindless of their own humanity; they are locked in relations which have taken the form of ones between things, a characteristic of unmitigated commodity capitalism; sexuality and artistic labour are depicted in this alienated form ...'

the action, and at times serves as a link for the narrative. The opening sequence, many minutes in length, and sustained with intercuts, is a night shot, dramatically foreshortened, of a squadron of helicopters spraying chemicals to exterminate a plague of insects. We meet the TV presenter, who bases his nightly talk show around it, as an example of humanity's control over nature. He has no conception, of course, of the rapacious effects of capitalist technology in this day and age: it creates at random human victims, who are permanently disfigured — like the effects of Agent Orange, a crop defoliant used by the US military in the Vietnam war. These machines look and sound like a horde of giant buzzing insects.

The opening scene works as a sort of visual metaphor — just like

the earthquake does at the film's end. Our TV presenter says that the spraying is necessary, because either mindless nature wins, or we do!

But the characters — or most of them — seem to be mindless of their own humanity; they are locked in relations which have taken the form of ones between things, a characteristic of unmitigated commodity capitalism; sexuality and artistic labour are depicted in this alienated form — the poolman's wife makes 'dirty' phone calls for money, while she changes her baby's diapers. She fakes explicit erotic sex. Later we discover that her husband is jealous, because she is too tired to do the same with him for real. There is a paradox here!

The doctor's wife paints pictures of nude women because they might sell well. Three fishermen discover

Cuts'. It is certainly true that most of the men in this film have an appalling attitude towards women. A young woman is murdered by a man; another commits suicide; another (Andy McDowell, in a brilliant performance) suffers the ultimate loss as a mother, although she is a blameless human being.

I think this is a film that portrays misogyny without seeking to condone it. It is a product of a deepening alienation. Los Angeles society is far down the road in the pursuit of that supreme fetish, money, which 'transforms fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, virtue into vice, vice into virtue'. Unwittingly or not, Altman is issuing a warning: the bad present can only get worse, unless we do something — soon — and not just a few tinkering reforms.

Men and women seem to be reduced to thinking: either I win —

life seems to be doomed by fate.

The film builds to its climax; but not before an emotionally charged scene between the TV presenter, his grieving wife, and a baker. The latter is revealed to be an overworked and struggling little self-employed man, who gets the wrong end of the stick. He is not as malevolent as he seems. Humanity is briefly restored. This serves as a resolution to one of several minor narratives in the film.

But the earthquake serves as a fitting climax to a complex intersecting tableaux of different lives among Los Angeles's lower middle class, the bad and the good. Nature is the great leveller for all humanity — or nearly so, on this occasion. Altman here demonstrates an uncanny prescience — or is it wishful thinking — since this film was made before the recent 'quake.



Lily Tomlin and Tom Waits as two of Altman's Los Angelinos in 'Short Cuts'

a dead body in the river. They decide to enjoy a weekend's recreation before reporting it to the police. Alienated labour discovers — fitfully — what it is to be human, that is, only when the men reach the river, where they can labour freely (fishing for trout), only to be confronted by evidence of the inhumanity of humans!

The obnoxious, adulterous policeman (Tim Robbins) picks a fight with his wife, because she wants to shut out the chemical rain. 'You're not going environmental on me', he screams above the roar of the helicopters. The TV presenter on the flickering screen in the corner of the room intones: it's perfectly safe. The policeman concedes to the closing of the doors; but not before he has shut out the family pet, a yapping little dog, which for him has ceased to be a novelty.

The film has many subtle moments like this. A little boy is knocked over by the café waitress (Lily Tomlin). She helps him up and tries to take him home in her car. The boy refuses to tell her his address, because his parents told him 'never speak to strangers'.

Altman has been accused of propagating misogyny in 'Short

or s/he does! This is certainly true of the helicopter pilot. He is estranged from a promiscuous wife. His attempt to celebrate her birthday is rebuffed because she has a date with the policeman. She also has someone else out of town. No wonder their small son can't remember each one's name!

Our helicopter pilot is told to come and collect his mother's grandfather clock while she's away. Instead he proceeds to systematically demolish the furniture with a power-saw, including the stuffing in the settee, the mattress, etc. In the midst of this carnage a salesman arrives to demonstrate his product. It's a vacuum cleaner!

One can only feel compassion for the Jack Lemmon character, clearly a man broken by life's harshness: he has been separated from his wife and son as a result of one fatal indiscretion, which his wife discovers by chance. His son is the TV presenter, whom he therefore only ever sees on TV. He finally finds the courage, or is it need, to visit his son. A father tries to explain what happened all those years ago, hoping for forgiveness. But it slowly dawns on him that he has arrived in the midst of his son's own family tragedy. The father's

The fictional 'quake in 'Short Cuts' is a sort of dress-rehearsal for the future apocalypse. If Altman is a convert to the 'end of history theory' — and he may well be incapable of seeing any alternative to capitalism, which is so emblematically displayed in this film — he clearly is not a fan. Therefore why not summon up divine intervention, an 'act of God', as the let-out clause states in the proverbial insurance policy?

The strange thing is that these modern Los Angelinos, the children of the 'brave new world' that has 'become somewhat rotten', seem to have developed a fatalistic attitude to the threat of another disastrous 'quake like that of 1906. They seem to be dimly aware that they have transgressed (but not capitalism itself); therefore they expect to be 'punished', by God or blind fate.

We observe, thanks to Altman as the eye of God, the dramatic personae — one or two in a state of definite ungrace — as they experience the great tremor: 'This is the big one', we hear them say; and when the tremors subside, they add, 'No! Not this time'. The grandfather clock, which was spared the ravages of the vengeful helicopter pilot, crashes to the floor.

Conflicted

I expect that the Workers International agrees with me in saying that — not today, but two-and-a-half years ago — both Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were workers' states and that therefore the right of self-determination of Slovenes, Croats, peoples of the Baltic states, etc., conflicted with the survival of the workers' states.

Clearly, there are similarities with the situation in Georgia in 1921 and Hoare agrees that the act of the Russian workers' state in suppressing the national minority was the lesser evil. I find it bizarre of the Workers International in the resolution of its second congress to describe the takeover of power by the pro-capitalist nationalists in Slovenia and Croatia as 'the revolutions of 1989-91'.

That was my criticism of the 'International' (August 1993) [journal of the Workers International] in my previous letter.

What I wrote and still consider to be the case — unless Hoare provides proof to the contrary — is that the replacement of the degenerated workers' states with capitalist ones, the replacement of Stalinism by capitalism, would be described by Trotsky as social counter-revolution and not as political revolution.

All Trotsky's writings, including those written shortly before he died, indicate that. I think this is the cornerstone of his analysis. I am afraid that Hoare — influenced by his justified hate and contempt for Stalinism and the damage it has caused to the workers' movement — has failed to grasp this analysis.

A breath of fresh air

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 preferment of a Cambridge man to advise her on the troubled past of her northern quendom.

Hardly the stuff of a Workers Press column, I hear you mutter. Yet regular Workers Press 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 for Bosnia 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 convoy 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 14th-century Scottish chronicler, perhaps because I spend some of my time trying to be a late 20th-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

Scandal of state corruption

Review by Nick Lee

THE late E.P. Thompson once remarked that there were large sections of the Establishment — civil service mandarins in particular — who had still not accepted the 1832 Reform Act, never mind modern parliamentary democracy. As the material from the Scott inquiry into the arms-to-Iraq scandal begins to leak out we begin to see how right he was.

Jane Corbin's investigation for PANORAMA: 'Truth is a Difficult Concept' (14 March, BBC1) was one of the first — of no doubt many — attempts to sift through the growing mountain of evidence gathered by the inquiry.

Through the use of dramatised reconstruction we were treated to a number of little vignettes of both Tory politicians and senior members of the state bureaucracy expressing their elegantly formulated contempt for the ordinary processes of bourgeois democracy.

Lies

Members of parliament asking questions about high matters of state is a form of impudence which can be normally just about tolerated. But when they become simply too meddling they 'obviously' have to be kept at bay with lies and half-truths.

Much of the programme concerned the notorious PII 'gagging' orders in the Matrix-Churchill trial, using which Tory ministers were prepared to send their own friends in the arms trade to jail to protect

themselves from embarrassment.

Matrix Churchill, the Pergaudam aid-for-arms affair — these little scandals are beginning to look like the tip of an iceberg of state corruption of truly 'Latin' proportions!

State corruption in Britain

the world now in its epoch of decline. By contrast 'Latin' corruption is about factionalism and regionally based power blocs within a weakly centralised state.

This difference was illustrated in another way in 'Underworld' (16 March, BBC1), the

parading across the screen — of course they never hurt a fly only their own sort, not like those young drug-heads of today — to a background narrated by movie star Bob Hoskins, making it all sound like tales of Cockney folklore.

Campbell is trying to trace the changing social structure of organised crime in Britain — something he started in his book 'That Was Business This is Personal'. On 16 March it was Buster Edwards. Previous episodes have covered the Krays — of course — and the Soho vice rings of the early 1960s. The concluding episode will cover the 'young drug-heads of today'

Crime

But the thing about traditional organised crime in Britain is that it remained a localised affair. Although in the heyday of the Soho vice rings there was plenty of police corruption — Robert Mark virtually closed down sections of the CID when he took over the Metropolitan Police in 1972 — the gangsters never, unlike in Italy or the United States, entered into alliances with politicians to secure votes or consolidate a regional power base.

The British ruling class has traditionally been too secure to need an alliance with organised crime. It had all it needed in the labour bureaucracy to secure its control over the working class. Its arrogance and corruption flowed from this sense of security. But that is all starting to change . . .



Customs officer Cedric Andrew going into the Scott inquiry last week. Customs & Excise had prosecuted Matrix Churchill in the arms-to-Iraq scandal

and in Italy is similar in that a long period of rule by one party leads bourgeois politicians to confuse public office with personal fiefdom.

But the basis of corruption is different. In Britain it is the arrogance of power of the political elite of one of the most centralised bourgeois states in

series on organised crime in Britain made by Duncan Campbell, the 'Guardian' journalist. This particular episode dealt with the rise of armed bank and bullion robbery during the 1960s and 1970s.

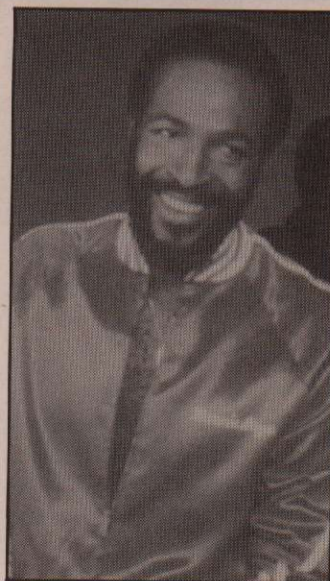
Much of the series has consisted of a 'where are they now?' of various ageing villains

Programme guide

Saturday 26 March 'The Giant Awakes: Shaking the World'. At its present rate of growth, China is set to become the biggest economy on earth by early next century (6.55pm, BBC2). 'Unplugged — Neil Young'. The series saves its best 'til last — the veteran singer/ songwriter in a *tour de force* performance from 1993 (7.45pm, BBC2). **ARENA: 'Trouble Man — The Last Years of Marvin Gaye'.** Using his own words and music together with previously unseen archive footage, the film tells the strange and tragic story of one of Motown's most critically acclaimed artists who was murdered in 1984 (9.05pm, BBC2).

Sunday 27 March THE MONEY PROGRAMME: 'South Africa'. What's the possibility of getting the country's crisis-ridden economy growing again as well as meeting the promises to the black population of a fair share of its wealth (7pm, BBC2).

Monday 28 March PANORAMA: 'The Red Peril'. A report on the rise of right-wing nationalism in Russia (9.30pm, BBC1). **THE FRENCH CONNECTION: 'First Convoy'.**



The story of Marvin Gaye, murdered in 1984, is on BBC2 on Saturday

AMA: 'The Red Peril'. A report on the rise of right-wing nationalism in Russia (9.30pm, BBC1). THE FRENCH CONNECTION: 'First Convoy'.

Survivors from the first convoy of French-based Jews recall how they were rounded up by the French police, handed over to the Nazis and despatched to Auschwitz (11.10pm, Channel 4). 'James Kelman: No Such Thing as Bad Language'. One of Scotland's most controversial authors gives his first major television interview on the eve of publication of his latest novel (11.15pm, BBC2).

Selected films

THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE (1977). Luis Brunel's final film. Satire on political and sexual terrorism. Fernando Rey plays the wealthy count; Carole Bouquet and Angela Molina share the role of the *femme fatale* (Saturday, 12.15am, BBC2). **VOYAGER (1991).** Sam Shepard as rootless traveller who meets up with the past of his pre-war student days. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff (Sunday, 11.20pm, BBC2). **BETTY BLUE (1986).** Tragi-comedy modern love affair between aspiring writer



Jean-Hughes Anglade and Beatrice Dalle in 'Betty Blue', a tragi-comedy love affair on Channel 4, Tuesday

and mentally unbalanced waitress. Written and directed by Jean-Jacques Beineix (Tuesday, 10pm, Channel 4).

JJ



Young Palestinian arrested by Israeli troops. Several were killed during angry demonstrations over the massacre at Hebron mosque. As the Palestinian Intifada flares up again, some of its anger is directed at leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) who have resumed peace talks

Intifada again

The boy lurked behind a stone wall
His hand holding a stone larger than his palm, heavier than his hatred
Weighing less than his determination.
He saw the enemy's car . . . he threw the stone . . . it did not reach its target
His weakness betrayed him.

Soldiers saw him, the driver stopped the car
The soldiers ran with devils' speed
Little legs fled but were chased by a giant
How easy for the eagle to prey on a bird
A soldier knelt on a knee and a half
He aimed at childhood and killed it.

The soldier thought there will be no more stones
He ambled away with the ease of a jungle beast licking off the blood of its prey
No sooner had he closed the safety, when a thousand stones fell on him
The child willed his hatred to every arm
Arms strengthened by firmer determination - arms that scored.

DIMA SAMMAN
(Dima Samman is a writer and journalist living in Ramallah, occupied Palestine. Translation by Samir Habash.)

Film review

Unexplained enigma

'SCHINDLER'S LIST', Steven Spielberg's film of the Nazi arms manufacturer Oskar Schindler, who saved over a thousand Polish Jews from the death camps, is playing to packed cinemas across Europe and the US.

Aspects of the film are quite brilliant. Spielberg has tried to find a way of representing the reality of the Nazi persecution of Jews to generations who have only read about it or seen the horrific newsreels of the extermination camps taken by the Allies in 1944.

He does not make the mistake of attempting to reproduce the exact horror of the death camps — that would be impossible, something to which we could not relate to and which would have anaesthetised us.

Brutality

Instead he concentrates on evoking the atmosphere of brutality and fear in a more effective way. The film is almost entirely in black and white — which is how all our images of that period are. Colour would have been an obstacle.

We are deliberately transported by the realism of the documentary format. With a few exceptions, all the actors are Poles and Germans. Even Schindler himself is played by the relatively unfamiliar face of

Liam Neeson. We rapidly forget that this is not a documentary. That was Spielberg's intention and he does it well.

The scenes of brutality rely on their mundane realism and moral effect rather than graphic portrayal of horror: the SS concentration-camp commandant, randomly shooting inmates from his balcony; SS troops ransacking houses and shooting Jews in the street; the clink of empty cartridge cases hitting the pavement; blood spurting for a few seconds from shattered arteries as bodies slump quickly and lifelessly to the ground.

This realism conveys horror and fear in a way that exposes standard Hollywood techniques like the 'slow motion' death as cheap gimmicks. It is to his credit that the maker of 'Jaws' and 'ET' avoided all reference to such methods.

But in other respects the film conforms to a Hollywood mould. Social forces, politics and history are at most a backdrop to the actions of individuals. Schindler, his Jewish accountant Itzak Stern (Ben Kingsley), and Amon Goeth, the paranoid sadist SS commandant of the Plaszow forced-labour camp (Ralph Fiennes), whom Schindler befriends and bribes to secure the release of his workers, are in this respect typical Hollywood characters.



Liam Neeson (left) as Schindler with Itzhak Stern (Ben Kingsley)

Schindler starts off as a war-profiteer, womaniser and egoist out to make a fast buck from Jewish slave labour and ends up paying bribes to the SS and risking his own neck to save his workers and their children from Auschwitz. He comes across as a lone individualist who makes the transition from opportunist to saint in an almost classic 'Western' pose: sitting on a horse overlooking the turmoil below — in this case the liquidation of the Jewish ghetto by the SS.

Yet he remains at the end of the film as he was at the beginning: a complete enigma. In this tale of love for humanity triumphing over narrow, bourgeois instinct to make money important questions remain unanswered. What was the basis of the Nazis' 'final solution'? Why did Schindler, a full member of the Nazi Party with plenty of friends in military intelligence and the armaments industry, risk his life for the *Schindlerjuden*? We never learn.

Pathetic

None of the characters represent historical forces, only themselves. Even Goeth the mad Nazi comes across as an idiosyncratic, at times pathetic, individualist. Everything else is background. Including, it has to be said, the Jews. Suffering silently and passively, they live and die as the outcome of deals and bargains conducted, in the midst of bouts of drinking and debauchery, by Schindler and Goeth. The problem might seem to be that Steven Spielberg is not Bertolt Brecht!

No, I think the unresolved enigma of 'Schindler's List' is that of the subject matter itself. Schindler could hardly be repre-

sented as a historical character when there is still such confusion today over what were the forces that sustained Nazism, apparently defused all effective opposition to the Hitler regime and led, by a process of almost bureaucratic momentum, to the murder of 6 million Jews.

These are questions that it is vital for us to clarify now as fascism and nazism start to rear their heads again in a western Europe that is far more like the 1930s than it was a decade ago. With the end of the

'Why did Schindler, a full member of the Nazi Party with plenty of friends in military intelligence and the armaments industry, risk his life for the *Schindlerjuden*? We never learn.'

'cold war' and the collapse of the 'welfare state', the key question of the relation between capitalism and fascism in the epoch of imperialism comes back to centre stage.

In this context, despite its limitations, 'Schindler's List' achieves its aim. By bringing back to life events that, for most young people, are just chapters in history books, the film dramatically reconnects us to those times and re-establishes a continuity with the present.

Nick Lee

City Lights

Europe's growth myth

OVER 20 million people will be without jobs in Europe by next year. One in four of them will be aged between 18 and 25. One in two currently out of work has been unemployed for a year or more.

The idea that 'economic growth' will eventually cure this problem is a myth. It is now estimated that even if the European economy grows by 2.5 per cent a year this will simply hold the present situation. Talk about growth at this pace is, in any case, pie in the sky.

Only last week, the annual economic forecasts from the European Commission warn that the unemployment rate will only begin to fall if growth is sustained at 3 per cent a year. But its own forecast is for growth of only 1.25 per cent for this year. It predicts that the present 11 per cent unemployment level will persist until 1996.

The two major economies in Europe — the French and the German — are at best stagnating. The German economy will, optimistically, expand by only 1 per cent this year; the French economy will do hardly any better. In Germany, some 900,000 jobs have disappeared since 1991, with another 450,000 expected to go. Another recent survey by consultants DRI-McGraw Hill suggests that in 17 industrial sectors, ranging from textiles to consumer electronics, one in eight jobs will be lost by the end of the decade.

Even if this 'restructuring' allows some European firms to compete more effectively in world markets there will, in the words of one German industrial consultant, Konrad Seitz, be 'a massive reduction in the labour force, a massive rise in unemployment'.

'Impoverishment, growing violence, social and political instability — that could all happen,' he says.

'Recovery' in Britain is overshadowed by the prospect of a serious balance of payments crisis as more imports are sucked in while exports, especially to the crucial European market, are at a standstill.

'Even if we could get back to growth of 3 or 4 per cent, which is extremely optimistic, that would still not create jobs for those now unemployed,' admits David O'Sullivan, a senior adviser to the European Union's employment commission.

O'Sullivan also knocks the claims of people like the Tory ministers in Britain with their ritualistic calls for greater 'efficiency' and the 'deregulation' of the labour market — that is, attacks on union rights, scrapping of health-and-safety provisions, etc. — as the means to more jobs:

'I have seen no evidence that achieving more competitiveness will solve unemployment. If we are honest with ourselves, the drive to restore industrial competitiveness is hostile to employment.'

Jean-Claude Paye, secretary-general of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says there are deep underlying structural problems associated with the current levels of unemployment.

For 20 years European governments 'have gone on adding to the social safety net without taking into consideration fundamental changes in the world economy,' he complains.

The result is that after each business cycle unemployment has ratcheted upwards, wages and social-security payments have increased, and European industry has found itself less

and less competitive.

A social-security system that was designed to deal with short-term unemployment is now the only means that millions have of long-term income support.

Taking Europe as a whole, one in five workers is now employed in the public sector, not counting the millions working in state-owned companies. In the European Union each member state spends on average a fifth of its national income on social-security protection as against some 14 per cent in the US.

'What we have in many cases are 1960s-style welfare states trying to operate in the high-unemployment 1990s,' says Robin Marshall, chief economist at Chase Manhattan bank in London. 'The social fabric is straining,' he adds.

Rising and semi-permanent unemployment is leading to yawning budget deficits. In 1993 not a single EU country was able to bring down its budget deficit as a proportion of its national income. In seven countries deficits actually soared.

IMF niet to Russian loans

THE International Monetary Fund has failed to agree on further loans for Russia. IMF officials, in Moscow last week for three days of talks with Russian leaders, are far from convinced that the Yeltsin government will be able to meet its promises for a tightening of the budget deficit.

The Russian government desperately needs more massive hard-cash injections to stem the continuing flight of capital, and to allow Russia to service its debt obligations and thus increase the chance of further debt relief and loans.

The IMF believes that the Russian government's projected expenditure will be far exceeded by the year-end, and that much of the projected tax revenue will not even be collected, a reflection of corruption as well as of a sharply declining tax base.

The lack of confidence in the Russia economy was reflected in recent trading in Russian debt on the international financial markets. In December you could buy a dollar's worth of Russian debt for 55 cents; that figure has fallen to 28 cents and was still dropping last week.

Capital's 'sheep' and 'goats'

BIG business will be allowed unprecedented influence in compulsory schooling under proposals for new vocational qualifications announced by Sir Ron Dearing, the government's adviser on the school curriculum.

Under the proposals 14-year-olds will be allowed to spend one day each week studying for 'qualifications' in subjects such as health services, leisure and tourism, and manufacturing. It is a scheme directed at children 'who are less interested in academic subjects'.

Business leaders are being consulted about the content of the courses and their financing. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications, a government quango, will have responsibility for vetting and administering the qualifications.

This is a thinly-disguised proposal to separate out 'sheep' and 'goats' at 14, rather than at 11.

Threadneedle



Schindler's workers being saved from death

Army feared Jersey revolt

NEWLY-released documents from Jersey show that the British army secretly warned of an explosion of islanders' anger at the end of World War II against those who had collaborated with the Nazi occupation.

Urged

In a private report to the Home Office, Brigadier A.E. Snow, head of the British Liberation Force, urged that troops should remain on the island.

'There is growing discontent

with the previous somewhat archaic and undemocratic form of government . . . this unpopularity [could] produce a situation in which the civil government is paralysed . . . as for instance in a general strike.'

Not all the documents on the German occupation are available. Some have been destroyed, and in November 1991 there was a major theft from the archives. Many documents about the deportation of Jews to Nazi concentration camps are still missing.



Staffer on Jersey 'Evening Post' discusses with Nazi censor

US tried to cover up Bosnia camps

FORMER US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger has been accused of trying to bury the truth about atrocities by Serb forces in Bosnia. An official says he was told the Bush administration 'could not afford' to confirm reports of concentration camps.

Having backed Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, President Bush's administration feared public outrage in the United States would force it to alter policy.

Speaking on an ABC News special programme, 'While America Watched', former state department east European expert John Fox said the US government 'had in its possession credible and verified reports of the existence of Serbian-run camps in Bosnia and elsewhere as of June, certainly July, of 1992.'

But after TV reports of the camps in August 1992, initially confirmed by state department press spokesman Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Niles testified to Congress that the administration had no 'substantial information on the matter'.

Afford

Fox, who was on the state department's policy planning staff, said he was told 'we could not afford to confirm the existence of these camps... I was told that by a senior official on the seventh floor of the state department'.

Appearing on the same ABC

programme, former Secretary of State Eagleburger, whose office was on the seventh floor, said the charge was 'baloney'.

The allegation of an attempted cover-up on Bosnia fits with what is known, but tends to be forgotten, about the Bush administration's Balkan policy. In June 1991, Eagleburger's predecessor, James Baker, visited Belgrade and assured Milosevic that the US wanted to preserve a united Yugoslavia.

Milosevic had already used the army against student demonstrators in Belgrade, and warned that if there was any attempt to loosen the ties of the Yugoslav republics, he would annex whole areas of Croatia and Bosnia. The interior ministry in Belgrade was assisting the criminal Arkan to set up his private army of fascists.

In June 1991, the Yugoslav federal army's tanks were sent into Slovenia, and in the autumn they moved into Croatia and Bosnia, commencing the bombardments of Vukovar and Dubrovnik, the latter from Bosnian soil. Bosnia-Herzegovina's turn came when it tried to free itself from this misuse. In spring 1992, Serb forces began 'ethnic cleansing' operations in Bosnia.



The banner of Workers Aid in France, Secours Ouvrier, on a miners' march in Paris during February. See Tuzla report — page 1

Bosnian presidency capitulates

KEITH SCOTCHER comments on the recent announcement in London by the Bosnian ambassador to the UN of the plan to carve up Bosnia

BOSNIA'S ambassador to the United Nations flew in to London on Wednesday 16 March to brief British MPs on the plan for a Bosnian-Croat federation in Bosnia, which had been agreed between the Bosnian and Croatian presidencies.

Perhaps the fact that the meeting was co-sponsored by Lady Olga Maitland explained why only two MPs attended, Maitland and another Tory MP. Workers Press attended the meeting alongside other, mainly foreign, journalists.

Ambassador Sacirbey briefly announced the US-brokered agreement, stating that he had been critical of the British government's policy on Bosnia.

He said that 'we have seen fascism suffer its first reverse,

not a military reverse but a philosophical reverse', in the Bosnian-Croatian agreement. It was time, he said, for moderate Serbs to effect a change in their side's position.

Workers Press asked if it were true that the agreement was based on setting up five Muslim and four Croatian cantons, and where this would leave the more than 1 million refugees who could not return home.

Sacirbey denied that the cantons would be ethnically based, and said that he retained the 'lofty goal' of returning refugees to Banja Luka, etc.

In fact an article in the 'Financial Times' that same week suggested that eastern Bosnia is to be annexed by Serbia. This would include the area

around the major besieged towns of Srebrenica, Zepa, Gorazde and Sarajevo, which is under UN control. Cantons will inevitably be 'ethnically' defined, meaning no respite for refugees.

Sacirbey said he saw the future in a strong association with the European Union, and expected economic assistance.

Lady Olga said there was already a joint Anglo-American reconstruction programme in hand. Sacirbey claimed they had been fighting against 'communism and the centralised economy' and for 'democracy and the market economy'.

Replying to Workers Press Sacirbey said that although the HVO Croatian army was to be merged with the BiH Bosnian army the federation would be a separate state from Croatia. (This was before the announcement that this 'Bosnian' federation would be federated to Croatia.)

He went on to claim that 'rejectionists' were for ethnic cleansing. Although this may be true of some Islamic fundamentalists, the fact is that the Bosnian people are not to be consulted on an agreement which leaves 70 per cent of Bosnia under the control of Serbian nationalists.

This agreement marks the capitulation of the Bosnian presidency to the US-Russian plan. It simply rewards the 'ethnic cleansers' who continue to terrorise and murder Muslims in the areas that they hold.

■ SAS who infiltrated the lines at the besieged town of Maglaj were met with suspicion by defenders, who banned them from the front line.

■ Some of the Britain's £12 million 'aid' package will be spent on setting up an office in Sarajevo to supervise the spending of the money — in other words, to ensure that British companies get the resulting contracts.

Arms embargo that kills

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

CORPORAL Barney Warburton, 27, from Gwynned, was killed in Bosnia last week, while helping clear unexploded mines from land in Vitez. Sapper Warburton, a bomb-disposal specialist, was only the second British soldier killed in Bosnia.

About 1,200 people, mostly Muslims, have been holding out in the Stari Vitez neighbourhood against besieging Croat forces.

Both sides have used improvised mines. But each week hundreds of people are being killed or maimed by mines in Bosnia and Croatia. **The British government is refusing them the means to protect themselves.**

It has been estimated that, until recently, Serb forces were laying up to 50,000 mines each week to prevent civilians returning to their homes in 'ethnically cleansed' areas. They include small Russian-made butterfly mines, which look like toys and are often picked up by small children, their main victims.

An application last month to export a £1,200 metal mine-detector was refused by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which said it could be used for military purposes, and therefore breached the European Union and United Nations arms embargo.

Corrupt and brutal

STRICT observance by the DTI of an arms embargo on Bosnia contrasts sharply with the British government's hot pursuit of arms deals in most

other places, particularly those with the most corrupt and brutal dictatorships.

Millions of pounds in taxpayers' money has been used to in order to 'sweeten' the deals with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

The Indonesian regime's bloody wars against the peoples of West Papua and East Timor present no bar to British loans and military-aircraft deals.

The arms-for-Iraq saga continued to unfold as the Scott inquiry continued last week, with the senior prosecutor in the Matrix-Churchill case saying documents withheld by the government included DTI documents showing officials knew Matrix Churchill machine-tools were being used for weapons manufacture, and a 1989 report from GCHQ linking the firm with Iraq's military build-up.

Meanwhile a US court hearing a claim by a former CIA operative, Gary Howard, that he wasn't paid for undercover work in London was told that RAF VC-10s were used to ferry military equipment to Iran; and that British arms dealer Ian Smalley, freed by a Texas court on orders from the justice department, had threatened to tell what he knew about British government involvement.

Court papers show Howard had been asked to spy on Smalley, who wanted to sell 40 reconditioned Jaguar engines to Iran for military use. Smalley was arrested in Britain in 1982, but jumped bail and went to the US.

He had told the defence ministry that if prosecuted he would 'blow the operation undertaken by the British government in relation to sales of military equipment to Iran'.

Although still wanted in the UK, no attempt has been made to extradite him since his release.

Middle East illegal deals

IN GERMANY, where a senior executive of the arms firm Heckler and Koch has been charged with illegal sales to the Middle East, documents have been obtained showing that weapons found in the former east German Stasi secret-police armoury had originally been sent to Britain.

The Royal Ordnance factory at Enfield took 100 MP5 machine-guns, similar to those used by the SAS, and 100 sniper rifles.

These were sold in parts and reassembled at Enfield. Some were supposed to have been exported to Colombia. But Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine-guns and sniper rifles have also turned up in the hands of Croat and Serbian forces in Bosnia (see 'Who supplies the guns?', Workers Press 6 March 1993).

The German company denied exporting them to former Yugoslavia, implying these weapons were made under licence in Britain.

So the British army's only other casualty in Bosnia so far, Lance Corporal Wayne Edwards, killed by a sniper in Gornji Vakuf in January last year, might have been killed with a British-supplied weapon. So, tragically, might hundreds of Bosnian civilians, whose country has been ripped apart, but who mustn't be allowed so much as a dustbin lid, or a mine detector, to defend themselves from fascist aggression.

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