

Rally in Tuzla to bring international workers' solidarity **ON ITS WAY!**

THE latest all-European Workers Aid convoy is bound for Tuzla and other towns in the north-east region of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As we went to press, about 40 lorries were gathering in Kamensko on the Croatia/Bosnia-Herzegovina border before beginning the long, hard drive through the mountains to Tuzla.

On the lorries are messages from different European trades unions and politicians. There are union banners which will be carried on a demonstration in Tuzla today (2 April).

Already work has begun on organising a miners' convoy from different parts of Europe to take, along with other aid, the mining equipment that the Tuzla miners need in order to resume production in the mines.

Bosnian communities in Germany have organised many of the lorries for the present convoy. Seventeen lorries of supplies collected by Slovenian miners have joined them. Young British drivers and a

woman driver from New Zealand helped bring lorries from Germany and Sweden. A group of young people from east Germany have also sent aid. And trades unionists from France and Spain joined with their lorries.

The Workers Aid team that reached Tuzla on 18 March has returned to Zagreb. Some have had to return to Britain but others have collected more aid and will return to Tuzla.

Preparation of the convoy was made difficult by language differences and shortage of resources. Lack of money to buy lorries also meant many drivers

and a lot of aid had to be left behind. Many people who have helped organise the convoy have been overwhelmed and exhausted by the amount of work necessary.

But the convoy is on its way, carrying food and medical supplies desperately needed by the people of Tuzla. It is also taking more than just aid. It carries a real message of international solidarity from the working people of Europe to the defenders of multi-ethnic Bosnia.

One group of lorries from Heidelberg, Stuttgart, Mannheim and east Germany met on the German-Austrian border. The drivers stuck big Workers Aid for Bosnia emblems on the sides of their lorries and many people from passing tourist coaches came over to take photographs and ask questions.

A meeting was held between convoy organisers and the heads of German and Austrian customs at the border crossing.

After first shaking their heads, the two men agreed to

allow the convoy to pass without any problems and helped complete the necessary paperwork. They then waved the convoy through the border and sent it on.

The ease with which the convoy passed through the various bureaucracies was clearly due not only to the size of the convoy but also the growing support from wide sections of the workers' movement.

In Britain more than 40 Labour MPs have backed the convoy and some have contacted the various embassies to ask for free passage for the convoy.

A small number of customs and immigration hiccups on the way were quickly sorted out by a combination of quick thinking on the various parts of the convoy, the groundwork prepared in the weeks before, help by various agencies (in particular from Colin Pickthall MP), and the Workers Aid offices in Britain and elsewhere.

Agreed

At the German border news came through that the Slovenian authorities had agreed, following a request from Pickthall, to allow the convoy to pass without paying the normal bond fees imposed on lorries.

These fees are designed to ensure that none of the aid remains in the country. With Workers Aid's tight budget this was a real victory.

A hold up on the Croatian border was soon overcome after telephone calls and written guarantees that the aid was for Tuzla and would not be left in Croatia were made, again by Pickthall. Without doubt there will be many more problems before the convoy reaches Tuzla, Brcko and the other towns where aid is being sent.

This convoy is only a small beginning but already its connections with thousands of people across Europe is clear.

The next stage is to build for the proposed miners' convoy that will take the desperately needed equipment so that production in the besieged town of Tuzla can resume.



Workers Aid drivers with statue of coal carved by Tuzla miner

Mining equipment needed

The miners of Tuzla need: helmets, portable gas detectors (CO, CO₂, fire, methane, oxygen), air velocity and pressure monitors.

Workers' movement support

At the time of going to press, 24 messages were sent to the rally being organised for Tuzla this Saturday (2 April) from: Workers Press; the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International; the Leicestershire and Yorkshire areas of the National Union of Mineworkers; the offshore workers' union OILC; the 43 MPs led by Colin Pickthall; Leeds, Bexley, Barking & Dagenham, Croydon, Aberdeen, Tower Hamlets and Cardiff trades councils; Southwark Building Workers Joint Shop Stewards' Committee; Edinburgh and Book branches and the national General Secretary John Foster of the National Union of Journalists; Salford Mental Health, Camden and Lambeth 'A' branches of the public service union UNISON; Revell & George and Trade Union Printing Services chapels of the print union GPMU; Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures; National Miners Support Network.

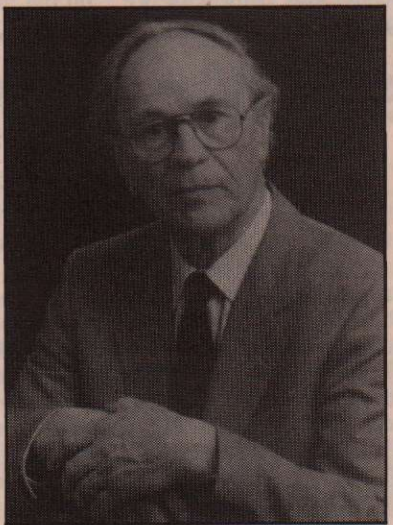
Backing from MPs

The following 43 MPs signed the recent Early Day Motion supporting the Workers Aid for Bosnia all-European convoy (Workers Press, 19 March): Colin Pickthall, Neil Gerard, Alice Mahon, Greg Pope, John Gunnell, Audrey Wise, Elyfn Llwyd, Cynog Dafis, John Austin-Walker, Bridget Prentice, Jimmy Dunnachie, Mike Hall, Alan Heale, Eric Tusley, Lynne Jones, Mike Watson, Dafydd Wigley, Dawn Primarolo, Harry Barnes, John Cummings, Norman Godman, Barry Jones, Eric Clarke, Calum MacDonald, Tony Banks, Nigel Jones, Jeremy Corbyn, Bill Hickie, Eddie Loyden, Alan Simpson, Win Griffiths, John Heppell, Lawrence Cunliffe, Keith Bradley, Mildred Gordon, Jim Dowd, Peter Hardy, Tony Worthington, Robert Parry, John Evans, Derek Enright, Anne Campbell, Terry Lewis.



After this picket of what was to be Prakash and Prem's final appeal against deportation, the adjudicator did not make a decision/recommendation, but will consider other evidence. The campaign against their deportation therefore continues. Prakash Chavrimootoo and her 10-year-old son, Prem, were threatened with deportation to Mauritius when Prakash's marriage broke up. Prakash says she was the victim of domestic violence. The campaign against deportation is supported by her trade union, UNISON. Photo: Mark Salmon

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International
Advance 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.



Just out! 'No More Blood on the Streets' is a booklet on racism by Tower Hamlets Trades Union Council. It is available from Martin Westwood, Tower Hamlets Trades Union Council, Davenant Centre, 179-181 Whitechapel Road, London E1.

Price £1 plus 25p postage.

TOWER HAMLETS TRADES UNION COUNCIL
No More Blood on the Streets
HOW TO FIGHT FASCISM AND RACISM

Tower Hamlets Trades Union Council, Davenant Centre, 179-181 Whitechapel Road, London E1. £1

This week:
More than simply aid, p2;
April fuel!, p3;
Death of a hero, p4;
'Don't let the world forget us', p5;
Film of realism and passion, p6;
Going back to the soil, p7;
Bosnian deal steps up pressure, back page

More than simply aid

TWO weeks ago a handful of battered vehicles limped into the northern Bosnian town of Tuzla after a long and arduous journey from Split on the Adriatic coast.

This Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy had intended to arrive at Christmas with emergency supplies and seasonal greetings from workers in Europe for this beleaguered working-class area. Their arrival, even late, is a victory for the solidarity of the world's working class over imperialism and nationalism.

The Tuzla mining region is being strangled. Serb nationalists, with the help of the United Nations and the Croatian government, have cut off the region's trading links with the world by blocking the Posavina route to the north. The alternative route from Split in the south of Croatia is a nightmare of makeshift roads — in many places crossing high mountains.

Since Workers Aid's first convoy last year, the campaign's main focus has been the opening of the northern aid route, which does not need the specialist vehicles needed for the road from Split. Reports from Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International leader Dot Gibson in Tuzla show that, after struggling down the dreadful roads from Split, the convoy team is even more convinced of the need to open the northern route.

Trade down this route would allow production in Tuzla to restart on a viable basis — a return to work and life! It would also break the Bosnian Serbs' supply line to their enclave centred on Banja Luka, effectively breaking the war — not with a UN ethnic carve-up but on the basis of the independence and multi-ethnic unity of Bosnia.

Most importantly, it would allow the working class outside of Bosnia to organise directly with workers in Tuzla for the defence and development of international working-class consciousness.

To merely send aid down the route from Split — and for many months at a stretch not even this was possible — would be to allow the UN to carry out its plan for the ethnic division of Bosnia.

* * * * *

WORKERS AID has demanded the right to use the northern route. Before the new year, Workers Aid refused to go to Split as demanded by the Croatian government. It was clear that because of the fighting the convoy would have been stuck in Split, along with hundreds of others.

Instead, the convoy fought with the Croatian government and gained the right to go down the northern route. Workers Aid trucks, joined by others, went to the border town of Zupanja in northern Croatia but could get no further at that time.

So why did Workers Aid now decide to send this convoy from Split? Does Workers Aid still campaign for the northern route? Is it not a capitulation to send trucks down the Split route?

These questions ignore the new situation. The recent 'accord' between the Croatian and Bosnian governments for a Bosnian-Croatian federation in half of Bosnia was forced on imperialist diplomacy by the refusal of Bosnians to submit to the ethnic carve-up, most notably by the working-class capital Tuzla.

While the US-sponsored 'accord' is another permutation of the UN carve-up plan and is not supported by Workers Aid, it does mean that convoys can travel through Bosnian-Croat-held territory without the same official hostility. There are still, of course, bands of desperate people who steal from convoys, but the dangers are much lessened.

More importantly, Workers Aid received news that the situation in Tuzla had deteriorated. The consistent onslaught on the community meant that ethnic divisions were emerging to break up working-class solidarity. The mayor, Selim Beslagic, specifically asked Workers Aid to come by any means possible to show international working-class support for Tuzla. When the convoy arrived, Beslagic said: 'We felt so alone, so isolated.'

The convoy did not only deliver much needed aid. It has now made contact and can now organise with the working-class in Tuzla. The team has brought out knowledge that can be used to strengthen the fight for working-class consciousness.

The latest convoy, which left last week, is taking banners from the trade union and workers' movement along with messages of support to show that the working class in Tuzla is not alone, not isolated, and that the international working class will come to its aid.

All being well, there is to be a rally today (2 April) in Tuzla itself — to be shown on television in Slovenia and Bosnia — where these banners will be displayed and the messages read out.

Letters

ESOPs pose questions

I WANT to begin a discussion among bus workers about Employee Share Ownership Programmes (ESOPs).

This year London Buses is putting its ten subsidiary bus companies up for sale to the private sector. A number of these are being done on the basis of ESOPs.

Some of us in the industry have been fighting for a clarification of ESOPs and a discussion on the real meaning of participation/control in the industry.

Union leaders at Greater Manchester Buses (GMBS) persuaded workers to take a 5 per cent cut in wages to 'reduce unit costs', measured in terms of the cost for every bus-mile operated.

More than 93 per cent of the workers took part in the ballot for the ESOP scheme. Of the 2,016 workers eligible to vote, 1,678 were in favour and 135 voted against.

Terms and conditions for the GMBS workforce are currently being negotiated and workers are being asked to subscribe to the buy-out. It has already been agreed that there will be a profit-related pay bonus, to be paid monthly.

An extensive advertising campaign during the ballot was carried out by a rival company bidding for ownership — Stagecoach.

An advert in the 'Manchester Evening News' asked workers at GMBS to consider:

■ If the concession on wages and conditions accepted on the ESOPs were to be given to Stagecoach, the company would pay £2,000 compensation. London Buses management carried out a similar manoeuvre last year on its new contracts.

■ Stagecoach claimed that only it could sustain the network and ensure long-term job prospects.

■ Stagecoach promised to buy 125 new single-decker buses within 12 months at a cost of £12 million.

Many union reps throughout the bus industry honestly think that ESOPs are the way forward. Many sincere people, including many left-thinking individuals, are also convinced. There is a need for a full discussion on all aspects of control.

A London busworker

Confront the problems

I'M sorry that Keith Flett ('Letters', 26 March) seems to have missed the point of my article about one-time Socialist Workers Party (SWP) industrial organiser Roger Rosewell, now a leader writer for the 'Daily Mail'.

Rosewell was in the news. He'd been on LBC radio defending Tory Westminster city council against the district auditor's report on its 'homes for votes' policy.

On 16 February the 'Guardian' supplement featured Rosewell's links with ex-council leader Lady Porter. Dave Hill remarked how Rosewell's views had changed since he was in the SWP. A picture caption described him as a former 'Trotskyist'. Whether myself or Keith Flett would agree on that description is not the point.

Rosewell wasn't the first traitor to our class, nor the most important. But nor was he just some right-wing union bureaucrat or parliamentary careerist. He had been supposedly a dedicated revolutionary, a leader in a purportedly Marxist party.

Workers might want to know how someone like this ends up defending one of the most despised Tory councils in Britain. Aren't they entitled to an account of his political career, on which to form some judgement?

Many of today's militants weren't around when 'Socialist Worker' dealt with Rosewell's desertion to the right-wing employers' outfit Aims of Industry, in 1982. Some were too young, others won't remember. They can't all go to the British Library at Colindale to look up what 'Socialist Worker' or 'Workers Press' said years ago!

I did not 'keep banging on' about Rosewell and the SWP, as Keith Flett puts it. I wrote one article ('A rat called Rosewell is a loathsome thing', Workers Press 5 March).

Having known Rosewell in the Labour youth movement in the early 1960s, and read about his desertion to Aims of Industry, I turned to people who'd known him in the SWP, to help me fill in the gaps. They recalled his career in the movement, and what they thought of him. Were they wrong to help me?

The following week I remarked that 'Socialist Worker', reporting events at Westminster, had said nothing about Rosewell. Keith Flett is short-sighted to see this as just me having a go at the SWP again. The SWP weren't the only people hit by Rosewell's treachery, his attacks on trades unionists (not least SWP members), or the anti-working-class policies he assisted in Westminster.

The SWP isn't the only party that has had problems. In 1985, the WRP had a problem with political corruption in the shape of Gerry Healy. Some people argued we should sweep it quietly under the carpet. A workmate of mine who was in the SWP said he couldn't understand why the WRP was making such a fuss over Healy's treatment of women.

Trotskyists say the crisis of humanity is a crisis of proletarian leadership. How can we

tackle the cynicism that demoralises people: 'Politics is a waste of time, you can't change the world, everyone sells out when they get the chance'?

How do we answer workers who ask: 'OK, what you say about the right-wing Labour leaders and Stalinist bureaucrats sounds true, but how do we know your lot would be any different?'

Of course, we won't prove everything by talk. But when we do talk, isn't it time for a bit of 'glasnost'? Time to stop saying 'not in front of the children', and confront the problems of working-class historical experience and leadership honestly?

Let's stop trying to paper over the cracks and rottenness; and *rebuild* the workers' movement!

Charlie Pottins
London SW1

Black workers & trades unions

PHIL EDWARDS ('Sweep the fascists off the streets', 12 March) failed to address the fact that one of the biggest problems that trades unionists in London's East End face is in convincing black workers that there is a role for them in the trade union movement.

What was needed — and this remains the case after the TUC demonstration on 19 March — was a trade union recruitment campaign among the many sweatshops in the area.

It was clearly ridiculous that, on the day when thousands of people marched against racism, Asian workers in Tower Hamlets and Turkish and Kurdish refugees in nearby Hackney continued to toil in the clothing sweatshops, where conditions remain little better than in the 19th century.

The experience of refugees in Hackney has been that where they have taken strike action in support of improved working conditions the trades unions have failed to support them.

For example, in 1990 a dispute involving Turkish and Kurdish workers at Bacton Fashions took place at a time when over 600 workers had recently been recruited to the Transport and General Workers' Union by local community organisations.

During the dispute the union, of which the workers were members, refused strike pay, attempted to stop them putting out appeals on TGWU notepaper, and then disappeared entirely after a 400-strong picket was attacked by the police's Territorial Support Group.

When the workforce was locked out, the TGWU abandoned the dispute and the workers lost their jobs. It was left to local community organisations to support four people charged with riot and actual bodily harm on the police. They were found

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not guilty at Snaresbrook Crown Court late in 1990.

In the struggle against the fascists the workplace is going to play a key role. In places already unionised we must seek to create rank-and-file, anti-racist workplace groups that can take up the struggle against racism at work, in the home, in the community, and on the streets.

These groups can then be used as a base for union recruitment of other workers, such as in the sweatshops, and for providing them with the assistance to understand the necessity of belonging to a union but retaining the need for independence from the union bureaucracy.

At the same time we need to be clear that the unions, as they currently stand, are instruments of control over workers and that ultimately only the destruction of this disgusting system called capitalism will mean that we will 'sweep the fascists off the streets'.

Mark Metcalf

(Written on the instructions of members of Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, c/o Colin Roach Centre, 10a Bradbury Street, London N16 8JN)

May local elections

ALL over Britain, electors will be asked to vote for local councillors in May.

What will they be asked to vote for? Real control of housing policy is now in the hands of the government via the housing agencies. Social services are run to the rules laid down by the government. Schools, roads, etc., are run by local councils or quangos to rules laid down by the government. The money they can raise by local council charge is controlled by government decree.

So apart from deciding what time the street lamps should go on and off, and the siting of the bottle banks, what real decisions do borough councils make?

If the answer is very little, should we bother to take part in elections to local councils?

The government's talk of more local people having more say in local government is clearly a fraud, but how should we react to the situation?

Apart from the street lamps and bottle banks, do we think local communities should have control of local schools, roads, libraries, swimming pools and social services?

If we do, do the May elections give us the chance to do so?

Or are these elections a fraud lent credence by the Labour Party by its failure to take up the central issue of who really runs local services?

Maybe this is an issue that the Workers Press could well expect some letters on.

Peter Gibson
London SW

Workers Press Monthly Fund

IN SO FAR: £1,645

WE ARE making real progress in rebuilding international working-class consciousness through the Workers Aid convoys led by our comrade Dot Gibson, and through work around the letter sent by North-East miner Dave Temple calling for an international conference of militant miners (see the 'International', February issue). These are coming together with proposals for a miners' convoy to Tuzla, so desperately wanted by that mining community in the region.

The miners of Tuzla have a long tradition of internationalism, and supported the British miners in their 1984-85 strike. They are particularly keen for contact with miners around the world and were shocked when they heard of the use of child labour in Colombian mines.

Responses to Dave's letter have come from all over eastern Europe. One of the latest is from Kazan in the Tartar republic in the Asian

part of the Russian federation! We are sending comrades to meet mine workers in the Ukraine. Other comrades are visiting Moscow and south Africa, where the Workers International is challenging the ANC in the election.

All this requires money, which is in short supply. The March fund is clearly going to fall short of the £3,000 target — not for the first time. How do we achieve what is necessary to rebuild the workers' movement, the Fourth International?

That work is being done now — in Tuzla, in the former Soviet Union. We must bring more people into this work and find from them the resources needed by the working class to build its own party fighting for its own class interests — the Fourth International. We must turn the slogans into reality.

Mike Cooke

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The best results money can buy

WHILE the Tory loony right tell us that only foreigners cheat at exams, British colleges get on with the serious business: fixing exam results.

The talk of most further education (FE) college staff rooms has finally got through to the 'Observer' (27 March). It is that our FE colleges now produce 'Mickey Mouse' qualifications with a dictionary of fancy titles. The GNVQ and NVQ are just the latest.

NVQs are supposed to be 'vocational A-levels'. They are models of how to destroy an education system. The Tory idea is to teach how to do things, but with a minimum of understanding. Students show practical competence, rather than understanding. This attempt to turn workers' education into a 'concept-free zone' is bad enough. Worse is to follow.

College teachers have to deal with the tidal waves of work associated with these new courses alongside other pressures. The first is the attempt by the government to smash established conditions of service. All colleges will lose money unless they destroy the established collective agreement embodied in the Silver Book.

The funding nightmare is not simply about conditions of service. Colleges face new methods of calculating the level of resources for student numbers. 'Failures' and 'drop outs' will lead to a significant loss of cash for colleges. This is a real threat to standards, with colleges rewarded with more money for high pass rates.

The impact is quoted in the 'Observer': 'Professor Alan Smithers of Manchester University, Britain's leading authority on vocational education, said he had been contacted by numerous lecturers: "They told me they wanted to fail people, but were not allowed to because funding depends on people passing".'

The 'Observer' goes on to make the point that the government is piling on the pressure for colleges to increase enrolments with the prospect of closure hanging over colleges which cannot or will not cram them in.

BY OUR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

management'. Small elites decide on how much taxpayers' money goes to top people. Pay rates have rocketed for those willing to dirty their hands to run the new system.

The exposure of the scandal of phoney qualifications (perhaps the next such exam should be known as a Portillo) would be a huge joke were it not for the fact that young people are being fed this stuff.

Coming soon will be the government enquiry. It will blame 'trendy lecturers' for setting dismal standards. Don't fall for it. The blame lies with the Tories. Lecturers are working hard to maintain standards against the pressures.

APRIL FUEL!

YESTERDAY, 1 April, saw the government's introduction of 8 per cent VAT on domestic fuel bills — perhaps the cruellest April Fool's joke there has ever been. The measure has aroused particular opposition in Scotland, where the winters are perceptibly longer and colder than in southern Britain, and where poverty is more widespread.

Many more electricity consumers use power cards than the UK average — 50,000 in central Scotland alone. Soon their meters will be recalibrated by Scottish Power to incorporate their new VAT charge. Card users will therefore be disconnecting themselves even more quickly than usual.

Meetings have been hurriedly convened in many Scottish cities in the last few weeks to discuss how to oppose the tax.

In Edinburgh, groups who organised the local anti-poll-tax campaign have been reactivated to start protests and resistance.

Many of them came together with pensioners and disabled people's groups at the end of February in a co-ordinating

BY HILARY HORROCKS

conference organised by Lothian Communities Campaign Against VAT on Fuel.

Despite 'compensation' for those on benefit, a pensioner or disabled person — for whom light and heat is indeed a life-and-death question — will lose between £60 and £70 a year.

Younger couples with families will fare even worse — they will have to find an extra £140 a year for this most essential of necessities.

'We believe that heat, light and warmth are basic human rights, which no one should be deprived of through poverty', declares a resolution agreed at the Edinburgh conference. It goes on to call for:

- the formation of autonomous local groups and networks in every community to resist VAT on fuel;
- collective non-payment and delayed payment of the VAT element of electricity and gas bills;
- the defence of non-payers' houses to prevent disconnections, coupled with appeals to electricity and gas workers not to carry out disconnections; and
- a campaign of direct action against the gas and electricity companies, and against the government, including

occupying the gas and electricity showrooms.

Former anti-poll-tax activists argued most forcibly for a new non-payment initiative. Many thought such a tactic essential as a focus for a campaign against VAT on fuel, but that the campaign should make a point of including those who felt they could not take such a step.

Publicity must make clear how long it is possible to delay VAT payment without incurring disconnection (up to 53 days with Scottish Power, 77 days with British Gas).

This time it will not be the sheriffs' officers or bailiffs — an arm of the state — who will be exacting the penalty for non-payment, but workers in the power industry, themselves faced with rocketing bills.

Community representatives in Edinburgh will be meeting British Gas workers facing redundancy at a local depot, with a view to discussing mutual resistance to attacks by government and employers.

Can a joint campaign between communities and unions begin on this issue, as it never really did on the poll tax? When it becomes illegal to take steps to keep yourself and your family alive, surely the question can no longer be postponed inside the unions.



Birmingham benefits staff strike

EXTRA work and no extra pay led to a walkout last week by Birmingham City Council UNISON members. The new system, multiple benefit assessment, means staff have to give advice on a wider range of benefits in new local offices. Staff, demanding regrading, picketed local offices, like the one in Ladywood (left).

New look TUC

MOST OF the work of the TUC is no longer overseen by the General Council, but by a new executive committee of 24 or 25 top union leaders. One of its first meetings appointed Des Wilson (who formerly chaired the Liberal Democrats) to run the TUC's campaigns on jobs and unemployment. To ensure that opposition to these moves does not take up too much time at the 1994 TUC congress, a day is to be set aside for workshops.

There is no truth that it is proposed to rename the TUC the Trades Union Workshop — not yet.

How the TUC blocks trades unionists fighting racism

BY PHIL EDWARDS

THE ANTI-RACIST march called by the TUC on 19 March met with an enormous response from the labour movement. Young Bengalis from east London enthusiastically joined the head of the march. But the platform at the end of the march confronted a field of thousands with banal platitudes.

Only the speaker from the Indian Workers' Association spoke of how fascism was derived from capitalism. Only the Tower Hamlets Nine campaign spoke of the need for their voice to be heard in the workers' movement.

Only Jelal Uddin, Tower Hamlets Labour councillor, referred to the problems of housing and unemployment faced by the working class on the Isle of Dogs, where the fascists won their seat. For the others it was enough to scream about 'white politicians' (Diane Abbott) or to taunt Liberal leader Paddy Ashdown for not coming to listen.

That same morning Bill Morris, leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union

(TGWU), had lamented the fact that Liberals and Tories had not been invited. TUC general secretary Monks had from the start supported a cross-party march.

But why wasn't Tower Hamlets trades council offered a place on the platform at the end of the march? It was the first to call it, and had fought, inside the local workers' movement and beyond, against a cross-party march and for a genuine working-class response to the threat posed by the fascists.

Following BNP fascist Beackon's election in the Millwall by-election, the trades council was invited to meet the TUC to report on the situation in Tower Hamlets. It proposed a march to the Isle of Dogs, and sought support from the TUC to set up an unemployed centre in Millwall.

In 'Campaign Against Racism and Fascism' (March-April), the trades council argued:

'With mounting unemployment we need to create a socialist alternative so that young people in particular are not attracted to the apparently radical alternatives offered by the fascist thugs... but since we

put the demand to the TUC we have been given the maximum grant under its current rules, amounting to £250. We cannot even begin to mount a real campaign with such a sum.

'But we are determined to find some way of generating within the movement itself the resources and the political understanding needed to make this possible'.

The next proposal from the TUC was to take up the suggestion of a march but to invite the Liberals and the Tories. In the 'Miner', (the national journal of the NUM, October 1993), the trades council argued that 'dealing with the fascists is the business of the working-class movement...'

Encourage

'The TUC responded to our call by proposing a "cross-party" demonstration with the Liberal Democrats. But it was the Liberal Democrats that helped encourage racism in Tower Hamlets in the first place'.

A 60-strong public meeting organised by the trades council responded angrily to the TUC spokesperson when it was revealed that they intended to invite the Liberals.

Later the TUC sent delegates to meet the Trades Council and community representatives, including representatives of THAR (Tower Hamlets Against Racism) and THARC (Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee), led by Kumar Murshid, a Labour party supporter and recently-elected to Anti Racism Alliance's executive.

sisted calls to invite police and religious leaders. The TUC tried at every opportunity to pass control from the workers' movement to church dignitaries and anyone else they could attract to their popular front. Monks announced that Tory ministers and Liberal leaders would be welcome to conferences of the TUC.

Liberal Democrat-run Tower Hamlets council refused access to Victoria Park, just as they had refused the use of York Hall to the family support campaign of Quddus Ali, victim of a brutal racist attack, after allowing its use by the BNP.

The trades council organised an open steering committee to organise for the march and held a public meeting on the Isle of Dogs, with no co-operation from the Anti Nazi League and the ARA.

The meeting attracted 40 people, many from local estates. Christine Shawcroft, local Labour councillor, and Micky Connolly (South-East Region TUC secretary), both of whom spoke. The trades council

displayed its new pamphlet on the fight against fascism in Tower Hamlets.

What was evident at the meeting was not that local workers had been recruited to fascism but that the Labour Party had ignored their cries for assistance and had failed to present them with either a material solution to their very basic economic needs or a political perspective with which to proceed.

The speaker from the trades council would have addressed these real problems had they been allowed to speak at the end of the march.

Instead they were told that they had been invited to speak for five minutes at the beginning in Spitalfields — where very few people were listening.

The trades council worked with every local activist on that platform at some stage in the campaign. Its right to speak at this important rally should not have even come into question. Instead it was consciously blocked.

Labour's business ethic backfires

THE LONDON Labour Party needs money for the local election campaign in May. The new business ethic in the Labour Party means instead of an appeal for donations to fight and defeat the Tories, they have sent out invoices, marked 'to be paid within 14 days', to all affiliated trade unions.

The response of the Transport and General Workers' Union to its 'invoice' for £15,000 was to send £300.

In the same week TGWU members voted by post on the political fund. Of the 29 per cent of members who voted, 82 per cent were in favour of having such a fund. They were clearly voting for a political battle, but not, it would seem, alongside the Labour Party.

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The Trades Union Council re-

Death of a hero

This article first appeared 60 years ago, in the January 1934 issue of the 'Red Flag', published by the Communist League, British section of the International Left Opposition formed by supporters of Leon Trotsky to fight the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International.

'The Red Flag', Britain's first Trotskyist paper, is available now in facsimile, in two volumes covering the periods 1933-4 (v.1) and 1935-37 (v.2), costing £5.95 each, from Porcupine Books, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX (071-837 4473).

THE heroic figures of the German Revolution are passing from the scene. Clara Zetkin soon after Hitler came to power; now Max Hoeltz is reported 'drowned while boating' on the Oka river in the USSR last September.

His death has received little notice in the Comintern [Communist International] press; his great fighting nature has little in common with that of the marionettes whose puppet play now occupies the Moscow stage.

Hoeltz stood in the direct line of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg [leaders of the Spartacists who led the 1918-19 German revolution], who but two years ago were so foully slandered by Stalin and his hacks. By his activities Hoeltz became a symbol to the German workers of all that was best and bravest in the band that carried on the struggle — arms in hand — for a Soviet Germany.

Born in 1899, the son of a farm

'The workers of Germany and of the world have lost a great fighter. We mourn his passing. His memory will live, an inspiration to the youth.'

labourer, he went from job to job and studied hard in his efforts to win a decent living. It was the war which first caused Hoeltz to question the existing order and made him ask 'what use this butchery could have for any one'.

While serving on the Russian front he heard of the Bolshevik Revolution. Hoeltz himself says that the news 'made a tremendous impression even on those of us who were not socialists. . . . Almost all of us were filled with the same thought: that this, at least, was the beginning of the end of the war.'

Discharged from the army in November 1918 [which was when the revolution began in Germany], his homeward journey through Germany enabled him to see something of the changes then taking place in the country. 'On the journey,' he wrote, 'I began to feel the enormous power of the crowd, which was quite able to march forward and act without officers. . . . I suddenly realised that these men threatened to crush everything that stood in their way.'

He heard of the workers' and soldiers' councils then being set up all over Germany. On reaching his home town, Falkenstein, he found that no such council existed there. He at once called a meeting and got one going.

At that meeting he came into

conflict with the local Independent Socialist Party leader, a conflict which, after some months in their ranks, grew with the sweep of the movement and led Hoeltz to found the local section of the Communist Party.

Workers' rule

ORGANISING the unemployed, he immediately came into open struggle with the authorities. The mayor, faced with the anger of the unemployed, sent for the military who arrested the entire unemployed council.

Hoeltz escaped, and with three other unemployed went to the town hall to demand that the troops leave the town. The officer in command pleaded for time. The answer of the unemployed was to storm the town hall, disarm the soldiers — who were none too willing to fight — and make them leave town.

The unemployed council then took over the administration. Profiteers' food hoards were seized and distributed, and the local capitalists compelled to grant credits to the town for the purchase of food-stuffs for the starving workers.

One incident is typical of Hoeltz's methods. When an employer, refusing to give an old farmerhand an increase in wages, said 'Go to Hoeltz, perhaps he will give you something', Hoeltz replied by ordering an increase for all this landowners' employees, otherwise his horses would be sold by the unemployed council, which would then distribute the proceeds among the workers on his estate. The landowner agreed.

The workers' rule was ended after the arrival of troops sent by the Social-Democratic governor of Dresden. Again the movement was suppressed; again Hoeltz escaped. For weeks he remained in the district while the soldiers sought him: so unsuccessfully that small boys would follow the soldiers around shouting 'Here is Hoeltz, I've got him in my pocket'. Hoeltz, after working in other districts, escaped over the border.

The reaction

THE news of the Kapp putsch — when troops under General Luttwitz marched on Berlin, drove out the republican government and established a military government — brought him back at once from safety into danger. During the general strike, which overthrew the military government, and the struggles that followed, Hoeltz played a prominent part.

Returning to his own district, he organised Red Army recruiting stations and, with the regular payments of money levied from local capitalists, the Red Army was maintained, and revolutionaries all over Germany were supplied with aid and arms. For quite a period Hoeltz and his armed-worker bands controlled Falkenstein and



Handing over the Garde-Vlanen barracks to the workers' council, Nov 1918. The placard says 'Brothers! Don't shoot!'

surrounding districts and repelled the reactionary troops.

The government, after suppressing the rebel movement in the Ruhr, surrounded the district with 50,000 regular troops, armed in the most modern style. In the face of this, Hoeltz and his comrades, after some skirmishes, disbanded their army.

The widespread revolt of the workers failed, in the words of Hoeltz himself, because, 'during the period of the Kapp putsch the most essential factor which might have brought about the ultimate victory of the revolution in Germany was lacking: a clear-sighted, well-disciplined Communist Party, which would have acted along firm revolutionary lines, did not exist in Germany'.

The abortive rising in central Germany in the following year again found Hoeltz organising his workers' guard and playing a courageous part in the struggle against the government troops. This rising too was crushed and,

after several escapes and continued activity, Hoeltz was betrayed by a spy and arrested.

In prison he was treated with great brutality, but at his trial he made a great stand. He was charged with the murder of a landowner: this charge he declared false. But for all the acts of his workers' army and organisation he accepted responsibility and declared without hesitation that the workers' victory could not be achieved save by force of arms.

While he was making this stand, Communist Party leader Heinrich Brandler, in another court, was stating that the party could get power by peaceful means, a statement that greatly distressed Hoeltz. Indeed, his autobiography avoids rather pointedly more than a passing reference to the party in these struggles.

In prison

THE death sentence was demanded but he was sentenced to penal

servitude for life on the false charge of murder, and it was not until 1928 that hunger strike and outside agitation secured his release.

His health had suffered through imprisonment and he went shortly after to the Soviet Union.

He returned to Germany and was wounded by a fascist, and had to go back to the USSR. Hoeltz, unlike so many others, did not regard his stay in the Soviet Union as marking the end of his revolutionary activity. He had entered the movement, without theoretical knowledge, under the influence of great events; he now set to work to acquire a thorough grasp of Marxism.

This, he hoped, would prove a valuable weapon for his work in Germany, which all the time he longed to take up again.

As far back as last February, at the time when Hitler became chancellor, Hoeltz addressed a request to the Comintern to allow him to return to Germany to aid in the fight against fascism. This was denied him.

For the new party

HOELTZ shared the views of his old comrades Wolf and Wollenburg, recently expelled, on the reasons for the collapse of the German Communist Party. In March he declared his support for the view that a new party was needed to replace the broken and besmirched Communist Party.

At that time he held discussions in his hotel room in Moscow and repeatedly expressed the opinion that the defeat of the German party was due to the false policy of the Comintern and to Stalin's 'socialism in one country' theory.

He held the expulsion of Trotsky and the Opposition to be one of the greatest crimes of the Russian Communist Party. Had he been able to return to Germany, there is little doubt but that he would have followed so many of his comrades in breaking with the Stalinist International and aiding in the rebuilding of the German revolutionary movement.

The workers of Germany and of the world have lost a great fighter. We mourn his passing. His memory will live, an inspiration to the youth. The fight goes on. Our ranks will be the weaker for his death, the stronger for his great example.



Armed detachment of Bolshevik Red Guards, who inspired Max Hoeltz

Book reviews

'Don't let the world forget us'

'Bosnia: A short history', by Noel Malcolm, Papermac £9.99.

'Why Bosnia?', edited by Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz, Pamphleteer's Press.

DANILO KIS, the son of Auschwitz concentration-camp victims and a foe of nationalism, appreciated Bosnia as 'an exotic country in the heart of Europe'. For many of us in Britain it has been, to paraphrase Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's notorious remark when betraying Czechoslovakia in 1938, 'a faraway country of which we know so little'.

Although Bosnians are driven to

political analysis and essays from writers including: Danilo Kis; Kemal Kurspahic, of Sarajevo's daily 'Oslobodjenje'; Bogdan Denitch, involved in democratic opposition in the last days of Yugoslavia; Shkelzen Maliqi, of the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo; and Branka Magas, who has spoken for Workers Aid for Bosnia.

The collation is spiced with poetry from past centuries, singing of Sarajevo and its gardens, from Mak Dizdar — a former post office worker and a World War II partisan, who is regarded as Bosnia-Herzegovina's greatest modern poet — and, biting-ly, from former Russian dis-

of nationalism. Pointing out that the national problem did not disappear under Stalinism — 'You could exile whole national groups to Central Asia' — Banac characterises Serbia's Milosevic regime, though it came from the ruling League of Communists, as akin to fascism.

Bogdan Denitch, a Serb who was active in left-wing politics in Croatia, and who was targeted by Serb nationalists for his politics and by Croat nationalists for his ethnicity, compares today's Croat Ustashe and Serb nationalist Chetniks with neo-Nazi skinheads in the West.

Denitch also describes first-



Help must come to Bosnia, whose destruction is considered final by imperialism

NOEL MALCOLM's 'Short history' takes us back through the mists and myths of time to Bosnia's origins, showing among other things the nonsense of racial claims. Apparently Bosnians — whether Muslim, Serb or Croat — are as mixed up in origin as the rest of us, with ancient Illyrians, Wlachs, long-forgotten Avars and Alans, as well as Slavs, all intermingled.

The Bosnian church of the Middle Ages, which Malcolm separates from a long-assumed identification with the Bogomil heresy, remains interestingly different from Catholic and Orthodox neighbours. Examining how Islam grew into the majority religion during the 15th and 16th century, Malcolm rejects notions of widespread forcible conversions, or any mass settlement of Muslims from outside.

A chapter on economic life under Ottoman rule up to 1815 shows how the local landowning and merchant classes developed their interests, along with Sarajevo's growing prosperity as a trading centre between two empires.

Bosnia's cultural life is also revealed, including the distinctive 'Aljamiado' literature in Serbo-Croat written in Arabic script. The author regrets not having had 'the opportunity to work in the libraries of Sarajevo while it was still possible to do so'.

Bosnia's Jewish community, it is explained, mainly traces its origins to the expulsion of Sephardi Jews from Spain 500 years ago; but Hebrew inscriptions were found in a ninth-century Avar graveyard, and Ashkenazi Jews arrived under the more recent Austro-Hungarian rule. Under Muslim rule, Sarajevo's Jews developed metal foundries, a silk trade, a particular form of housing, and a heretical movement of their own under a disciple of the messianic Sabbatei Zvi. Later, Bosnia's three leading factory-owners were Sephardi Jews.

During World War I, Bosnian Muslims struggled to find their national allegiance; during World War II they were caught between fires, alternatively wooed and persecuted by Ustashe fascists and by Serb-nationalist Chetniks, from which the Communist Party's partisans were not always separate at first.

I'd heard how the Nazis used a visit by the Mufti of Jerusalem to

raise a Muslim Waffen SS unit. Some naively enlisted thinking to defend their people against well-armed predators. I didn't know until I read Noel Malcolm's book that in September 1943, at a training camp near Toulouse in France, the Bosnians mutinied.

They shot their German officers, and tried to get away to join the French Maquis (a secret army of patriots), but were put down by German troops. The same month Tito formed the 16th Muslim Partisan Brigade. Such developments probably did much to firm up the concept of a Muslim ethnic (i.e. secular) identity.

Malcolm's World War II chapter is contentious, when it downplays the partisan struggle, and distinctly anti-communist. He cites Milovan Djilas as 'finally admitting' wartime negotiations with the Germans, in his book 'Wartime'. But Djilas's account of how partisans used their capture of a senior German officer to negotiate prisoner exchange hardly sustains Malcolm's claim of a major strategic plan.

The description of Bosnia's treatment under the post-war rule of Titoism (which wasn't always that different from ordinary Stalinism), and the detailed account of how Yugoslavia broke up, will be particularly useful in helping us grasp how the present war came about.

The author criticises Western governments' failure to recognise 'ethnic cleansing' as a deliberate war aim, not an accident. And the acceptance of the UN-sponsored Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg plan to divide the country contributed to the conflict; while the arms embargo was weighted against Bosnia, he reminds us of Douglas Hurd's key part in keeping it.

Britain's defence secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, told Christopher Hitchens in May 1993 that lifting the arms embargo would be 'the worst of all possible options'. Why? 'It would mean that we lost control,' quotes 'Why Bosnia'.

What a revealing slip, Hitchens points out, when they constantly deny having control, insisting they must ask Serb or Croat forces permission to move a bandage! And what a giveaway of the imperialists' real war aims.

Charlie Pottins



Partisans mustering for review in Bosnian mountains, 1943 (from 'Wartime', by Milovan Djilas, Secker and Warburg, 1977)

the four winds by fascism, their rich cultural heritage is sent up in flames by the new barbarians, and their country's destruction is treated as final by imperialist statesmen, it is not too late to act, nor to remedy our ignorance.

In 'Why Bosnia?', a collection of writings on the Balkan war, T.D. Allman describes the Serb-run camp in Bosnia where he noticed 'that grown men starve differently from the way children do'. In a cow shed on a cold mountainside, he asked one of 1,200 prisoners held there, 'Croat or Muslim?'

Those around him laughed. The young prisoner was a Serb, baptised Orthodox, but unfortunate enough to have been with Muslim friends when all the Muslims in his town were rounded up. The Serb forces called them 'prisoners of war' but couldn't display any captured weapons. 'Tell the world', prisoners urged Allman desperately, 'don't let the world forget us.'

Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz bring together journalism,

sident and Nobel prizewinner Joseph Brodsky:

In the towns with funny names, hit by bullets, caught in flames, by and large not knowing why, people die.

In small places you don't know of yet big for having no chance to scream or say good-bye people die.

People die as you elect brand new dudes who preach neglect, self-restraint, etc. — whereby people die.

Ivo Banac blames Western governments and the Vance-Owen plan for the Bosnian people's plight, calls for Bosnia to be allowed arms to defend itself, and criticises British ex-Communist Party writer Eric Hobsbawm as 'singularly ill-prepared' to deal with the problem

hand how reformist intellectuals with democratic ideals came unstuck under the hammers of nationalism.

A heavy blow came when Mihailo Markovic, once a well-known dissident with the journal 'Praxis', joined Milosevic's Serbian Socialist Party. 'All that had remained of its "socialism" was the loyalty of the secret police and the old nomenklatura.'

As Yugoslavia fell apart, Bosnia, with almost 25 per cent of marriages being inter-ethnic, and with the figure higher in the cities, remained an island of optimism, Denitch says.

In Tuzla non-nationalist reformists and the reformed League of Communists ruled in the governing coalition. Denitch sees the war in Bosnia as an 'urbicide', the revenge of narrow provincial nationalists hitting at modern cities where people inter-married, women entered the professions, and the young rejected religion and tradition.

John Fordun

Lessons of the recent past

'A NIGHT of nostalgia,' was how a BBC Scotland radio reporter described the social evening at Mayfield Labour Club near Edinburgh on Friday 11 March.

'Nostalgia', my dictionary divulges, is 'sentimental longing for the conditions of the (usually recent) past. . . I think the reporter uses a different dictionary.'

The occasion was the tenth anniversary of the 1984-85 miners' strike. Over 300 people packed the club's function suite. If you had played even a small part in supporting the strikers in the Lothian area, you could hardly step inside the door without your hand being warmly shaken, a chair and a drink being offered.

It was a reunion, certainly. Reminiscences were exchanged, and maybe, by the wee sma' hours, a few eyes were moister than usual. But it was not a gathering of sentimental and regretful people. 'I'd do the same tomorrow,' was the most frequently heard comment about the strike.

It was made unconditionally. There was little time wasted on speculation about how things might have been done differently.

And most of the talk was about what has happened since: of new jobs, new paths in education; of bringing up children to a different world; of finding alternative avenues for the struggle against the Tory enemy. It has been hard, but it has been a period rich in experience.

There were some speeches. They began with brief, purposeful statements from one of the guests, a former miner from Ollerton in Northumberland; and from Davie Hamilton, a courageous Lothian militant who was jailed during the strike.

At the top of the bill were the principal supporting speaker, Mick McGahey, NUM vice-president and Scottish area president at the time; and NUM president Arthur Scargill. Each got a great ovation.

When the latter had finished, a familiar chorus came from one part of the hall: 'Arthur Scargill, Arthur Scargill, we'll support you evermore!'

What Scargill said commanded general assent. He denounced media pundits who pontificate ignorantly on how a just fight was lost through misguided tactics.

He showed how the strike had been on the verge of victory more than once. A former cabinet minister had later told him that the Thatcher government would have done anything to win.

The Tories were determined on revenge for the miners' victories over Heath in 1972 and 1974. A word of leadership from the TUC and Labour Party hierarchies against the crossing of picket lines could have been decisive. If the pit deputies' union NACODS had not done a deal with the government after it had secured an 80 per cent ballot vote for strike action in the autumn of 1984 — the battle would have been won.

Had the trade union movement been mobilised in support of the miners, the history of the last decade would have been very different. Much that has

now been lost would not have been lost.

The next Labour government must represent the working class with the same determination as the Tories have shown in acting for their class.

The reception for Scargill was heartfelt, the eagerness to shake his hand a tribute to the feeling that he, more than any other figure in the British labour movement, genuinely represents the working class. Yet, at Mayfield, he did not quite catch the mood of an important section of his audience.

'He went on too long,' said one former miner, a loyal supporter throughout the strike. 'He said nothing new,' remarked another.

'Don't get me wrong, he's a great man,' said a woman who had been a tireless activist in one of the support groups in Lothian. I was struck by the possibility that she was about to say something that might create even the smidgen of a doubt about that.

Scargill's fulsome tribute to the role of the women's support groups, she went on, had little force beyond lip-service. He was sincere, of course, but he did not seem to understand that the strike had transformed the outlook of many of the women, made them question everything about their lives.

It had unleashed previously unthinkable thoughts about their role in society, in the labour movement and in their relationships with their menfolk. It was a much bigger experience than some of the men seemed to realise.

There was another aspect of the president's speech which suggested that he was merely referring to things that require profound analysis.

He spoke of the international impact of the strike, but had nothing to say about how the significance of this might be understood afresh in the aftermath of the collapse, between 1989 and 1991, of the world Stalinist system.

The lessons of the miners' strike remain today of vital importance to the workers' movement in Britain, and internationally. A forum to discuss them more deeply must be found.

Where better to begin than in the columns of Workers Press? Letters and articles on this subject will, I am sure, be welcomed by the editor.

Or, if there are points you think might best be incorporated in this column, you can make them directly to Terry Brotherstone, University of Aberdeen, Department of History, Old Aberdeen AB9 2UB.

BEFORE MY stint as stand-in columnist is done, I intend to reply to some of the comments 'John Fordun' has provoked, whether in communications to his alter ego, or in letters to the ed. Many thanks to all correspondents. It is good to know that the words I wrestle on from week to week are being read by someone, even if you think they add up to a load of baloney.

To Jim Young (Letters, 12 March), who knows how muddled I am about Scottish nationalism, I particularly promise a response. A discussion about the lessons of 1984-85 could provide an excellent class context within which to argue about what weight socialists north of the border — and elsewhere — should give to the Scottish question.

Many Workers Press readers, I happen to know, have strong opinions on this. I hope they will contribute their views. And maybe Jim Young himself might tackle one of the tasks he is anxious to assign to me. It would be good to know why he thinks Linda Colley's much admired book 'Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837' is 'deeply reactionary'.

Television

Film of realism and passion

'Hedd Wynn' reviewed by Tom Owen

HEDD WYN means White Peace, the *nom de plume* of the Welsh poet Ellis Efans. Largely unknown outside Welsh-speaking Wales, he has now become the focus of media attention because the small independent Welsh language company, Pendefig, has made a film of his life for S4C, Channel 4's Welsh sister channel, where it was first shown in November 1991.

'Hedd Wyn — The Armageddon Poet' (15 February, Channel 4), already garlanded with awards, notably the six it received at the BAFTA Cymru Award Ceremony (the most won by any one programme), was also the first British film to be nominated for an Oscar in the Best foreign film category at this year's Academy Awards.

Nothing was further from the mind of the production team when they made the film. The drama director, Paul Turner, and the script writer, Alan Llwyd, had wanted to bring to the attention of the English-speaking world the life of someone who has become part of the mythology of Welsh culture. And this they have done admirably.

The project must have been a minefield of pitfalls. Cultural myths are a very dangerous currency to handle, but the realism and the passion of the film allows it to rise above the constraints of the budget or the hallowed presence of the Welsh literary elite.

Ellis Efans left school to work on his father's hill farm near Trawsfynydd at the age of 14. He educated himself by night and learned the exacting disciplines of traditional Welsh poetry.



Huw Garmon and Sue Rodderick in 'Hedd Wynn'

Like his English contemporary, Wilfred Owen, he was profoundly influenced by the English Romantic poets, in Efan's case, Percy Shelley.

When World War I broke out Efans worked on his father's farm and resisted the pressure

to enlist until the army recruiting boards insisted that either he, now at the age of 29, or his younger brother, barely 18, had to be enlisted. He died in the trenches at Passchendaele in 1917.

Just before his death he had

submitted an epic poem, 'Y Arwr' ('The Hero'), to the National Eisteddfod, for which he was awarded the Bardic Chair, the ultimate accolade for any poet in Wales and an honour usually reserved for poets who had received university education.

The film is part of a tradition of Welsh-language television feature production. Its great strength lies in its realistic depiction of a national myth.

Ellis Efans, who is portrayed in the film by Huw Garmon, was a part of a unique social and cultural formation, the gwerid, the self-taught Welsh-speaking plebeian intelligentsia of arsons, farmworkers, quarryworkers and miners. In many ways it is this formation that has kept the language a living one rather than the clergy and the academics.

The film shows powerfully how World War I divided the largely Non-Conformist North Wales communities at all levels in the villages, the families and the homes.

It also explores the social divisions between the literary elites of the ministers, teachers and academics and the working class and peasant native speakers.

Indeed a great deal of the vigour of the film comes from the consistent and imaginative use of the North Wales dialect variety of Welsh.

The brutality of the military and the horror of imperial war are poignantly exposed. There is no hint of English bashing, just a sense of the solidarity and terror of the trenches. A Cockney soldier comforts the dying Welsh poet.

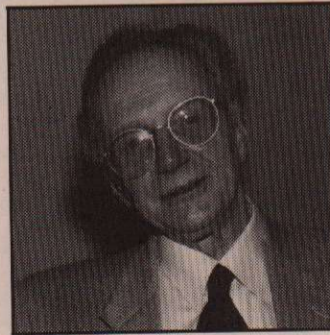
Programme guide

Saturday 2 April THE FRENCH CONNECTION: 'Rage and Outrage'. Ute Lempert in a cabaret version of the infamous Dreyfus case which mixes contemporary songs with readings from letters and speeches of the day, highlighting the hatred and passion it unleashed (11.05pm, Channel 4).

Sunday 3 April FINE CUT: 'In Search of Buddha'. Examination of what drew director Bernardo Bertolucci to one of the most revered and timeless icons for his film 'The Little Buddha' (3pm, BBC2).

Monday 4 April FINE CUT: 'Shepherds — Time of the Bar-men'. About members of an ancient and isolated Mediterranean culture, noted for its linguistic and social diversity, whose traditional ways are increasingly under threat by mainstream Italian culture (11.20am, BBC2).

Tuesday 5 April WITHOUT WALLS SPECIAL: 'An Interview With Dennis Potter'. The controversial television dramatist, who was recently told he has only a few months to



'Without Walls Special: An Interview With Dennis Potter', Channel 4, Tuesday 5 April, 9pm

live, talks about his career, political beliefs and fears for the future of British television and society (9pm, Channel 4). **OMNIBUS: 'Bill T. Jones, Arnie Zane and Co.'** A behind-the-scenes look at one of the most innovative choreographers at work today. Includes portraits of members of Jones's troupe interest with stage performances such as their remarkable 'Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin' (10.50pm, BBC1).

Wednesday 6 April TIME-WATCH: 'Racism or Realism?'

— 'A History of Immigration'. Jonathan Dibley hosts a programme about the history of black immigration into Britain. Participants in the studio discussion include key policy makers from that era such as Enoch Powell and representatives of those groups affected by government decisions (8.10pm, BBC2).

Thursday 7 April BLACK BAG SPECIAL: 'Race Busters'. This investigation into racism in Britain follows self-help group SARI: Support Against Racial Incidents (9pm, Channel 4). 'Beloved Country: Wild Boer'. Documentary about staunch member of neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement, Billy Minnie, leader of a squatters' camp for destitute whites (9.30pm, BBC2).

Selected films
LE DOULOS (1962). Jean-Paul Belmondo and Serge Reggiani in Jean-Pierre Melville's sinister gangster tale of treachery in the French underworld (Monday, 11.35pm, BBC2). **ORPHEE (1950).** Jean Cocteau's visually stunning update of the Orpheus legend. With Jean Marais as the poetobses-



Singer Ute Lempert in 'Rage and Outrage' on Channel 4, Saturday 2 April, 11.05pm

sed with the Princess of Des who comes to him through a mirror (Wednesday, 12.05am, BBC2). **LES BELLES NUIT (1952).** Rene Clair's charming fantasy about a young composer who escapes life's drudgery by taking refuge in dreams of romantic adventures. With Gerard Philipe, Martine Carole and G. Lollobrigida (Thursday, 12.05am, BBC2).

China tries to head off independent union

BY PETER GIBSON

THE OFFICIAL All-China Federation of Trade Unions began a drive in February to double the number of union members in China. They claim that less than 30 per cent of the foreign-owned factories are unionised, although Chinese trade union law requires that trades unions have a seat on the company's board of directors.

There have been persistent criticisms by the Chinese unions of exploitative foreign bosses. Union branch officials have claimed that some foreign employers violated workers' rights 'randomly and openly'. Other complaints are of employers disregarding minimum standards set by the state.

ly concerned at the rise in labour unrest and strikes. This is a reflection of the many thousands of workplaces facing closure because of the government's plan to close 'loss-making' enterprises.

The labour ministry is to inspect all urban plants between April and June looking for violation of the child labour laws and the exploitation of women. They will be checking for those foreign employers who are reported to have prolonged workers' hours, cut wages, neglected safety rules

However, it is not a coincidence there are growing calls for independent trades unions.

The Beijing-based 'China Election News' has recently reported that there were more than 10,000 disputes in many occurred in the Shenzhen special economic zone, which is next to Hong Kong and has attracted millions of people from central China to work in the booming industrial area.

There is clearly a fear that independent of the state organisation may develop among the Chinese working class and working people from the exploitation of Western investors.

Going back to the soil

TOM OWEN examines an important set of cultural myths about rural England

AT the closing of the mass demonstration in Hyde Park against Heseltine's original pit closure programme in 1992, the crowd sang William Blake's song, 'Jerusalem'. Everyone seemed to know his song by heart. Blake, a visionary poet and radical supporter of the French Revolution, wrote this poem as part of the preface to his lengthy poem to the great 17th-century poet and revolu-

tionary John Milton. A window briefly opened on a deeply obscured but nonetheless deeply embedded tradition in British political and cultural life.

But a poem like Blake's 'Jerusalem', with its biblical rhetoric and its visionary dissenting mythology, can be read from a variety of ideological predispositions. However, what has passed into the English language, almost as proverbial

wisdom, is the opposition between the 'dark satanic mills' and 'England's green and pleasant land'.

Blake's 'Milton' was written between 1804 and 1808 and so his vision of the 'dark satanic mill' is symbolic or at least provisional and his experience, as an urban dweller for most of his life, of the green and pleasant England of his time only limited.

Blake's libertarian opposition to early industrialisation stemmed from his deep hostility to the rationalism and scientific optimism of the 18th century English and Scottish Enlightenment.

He never lived to see the full extent of the explosion of the productive forces in the 19th century, what is now referred to in the text books as the industrial revolution.

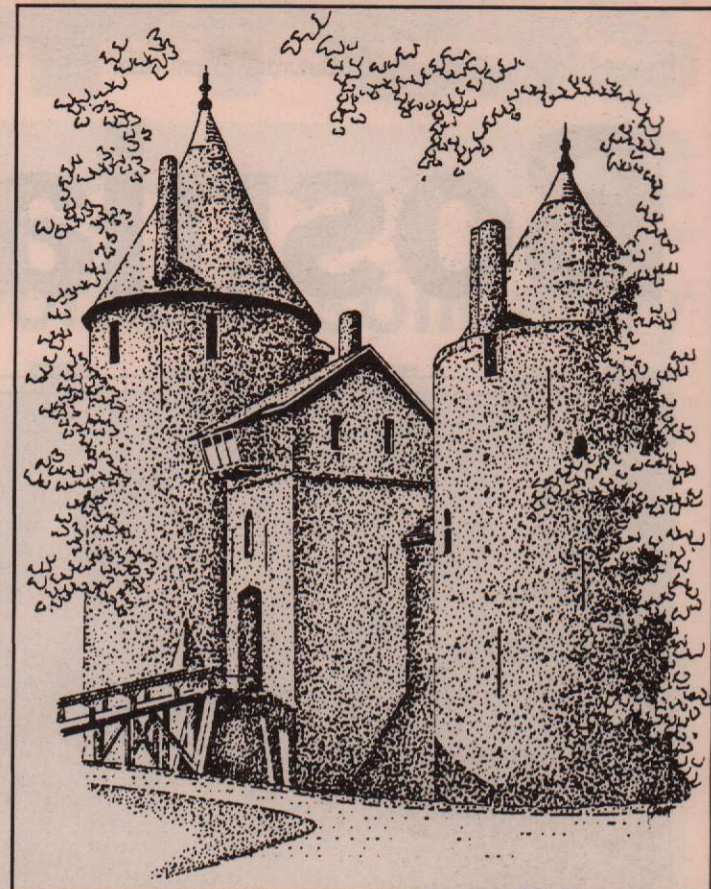
After finally establishing its hegemony over the English aristocracy in the mid-19th century, the British bourgeoisie underwent a curious cultural sea-change, as did the aristocracy.

The latter exploited mineral resources like coal or profited from railway development over their estates, found active occupations in empire building or sought the more gentlemanly climates of diplomacy or finance capital.

The capitalist class and their middle-class professionals busily gentrified themselves, distancing themselves from the 'dark satanic mills' they had created.

To present themselves as the national class the British bourgeoisie were divided as to the appropriate identity they should assume.

On the one hand, there was the puritan tradition of thrift, industry and invention. On the other there was the increasingly attractive lure of aristocratic order and leisurely refine-



Not a medieval castle, but a Victorian fantasy — built for the Bute family with the proceeds of south Wales coal exports

ment. This contradictory self image found its expression in a 'crisis of taste' from the mid-century onwards — or more urgently in a contest between the 'southern' and the 'northern metaphor'.

The distancing of the middle classes from the sordid and degraded world of the urban and industrial capitalism was expressed in the creation of a set of powerful myths.

One was an elaboration of the 'southern metaphor', the creation of a perpetual rural England of eccentric clergymen and sturdy yeomanry, a society that was organic and bereft of class contradiction and struggle. This vision carefully edited out the English Civil War as an aberration, so that a direct line of continuity could be established between the glories of the Victorian era and those of the reign of Elizabeth I.

Literary figures like Thomas Hardy and George Eliot contributed in their own way to the creation of a myth of a lost English idyll. Marx is more scathing when he talks of 'rural idiocy', or Engels of the 'vegetation' of the rural proto-proletariat.

The history of the English 'peasantry', a rural proletariat, is also one of resistance to enclosures, famine and bread riots. The 19th century witnessed the greatest insurrection in English rural history since the peasants' revolt, the 'Swing riots', which spread from the 'Garden of England', Kent, as far as Somerset in the west and East Anglia in the east. The vengeance of the ruling class involved mass deportations and judicial lynchings.

The other mythic reconstruction was the Gothic revival, a passion for medievalism. Town halls, Houses of Parliament, railway stations, were built in the style of medieval cathedrals and castles. The early socialist movement also drew on this myth.

William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement looked to the medieval craft guilds as models of unalienated labour. The iconography of trade union banners also attests to the pervasiveness of this cultural myth.

'Pastoralism' is still a powerful pull; it provided a set of nationalistic symbols in World War II. Ex-Labour cabinet ministers, from Aneurin Bevan to Jim Callaghan, became gentlemen farmers as did the once radical British manufacturers.

The Tory Party is now desperately mixing its 'northern and southern' metaphors. John Major's 'back to basics' speech recalls an England of cricket grounds, warm beer (certainly not chilled European lagers) and villagers attending church.

Portillo and Lilley rail against the 'feckless working classes' and their daughters who get pregnant and choose to live outside wedlock.

Those Tories, generals and clergy who long ago learned to live with the aristocratic personal politics of hypocrisy are having their private lives unravelled in public by the ever-inventive and industrious free market press.

That peculiar admix of unbridled self interest and moral rectitude that held the British ruling classes together and created their national myths is now crumbling.

They will soon have to look to more vulgar and strident myth-makers who have always been prepared to take on their patronage. Neither they nor their dependent apologists will ever be able to cast off what William Blake in another proverbial poem described as their 'mind-forged manacles'.



No rural idyll here: families thrown out of job and home for trade union membership in 1874

Earwigs and social democracy

TIME was when no one could be assured of greater respect from the liberal press in Britain than a right-wing social democrat who had served as a principal officer of state in a Labour cabinet. The response, a couple of weeks ago, of the 'Observer's' John Naughton to the final twist in the 'Threshergate' affair was a sign that things have changed.

The Independent Television Commission had upheld a complaint from the former Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont, concerning an advertisement which featured one of his predecessors, Labour's Denis Healey, outside a branch of Thresher's, the wine merchant.

You will recall that Lamont's resignation from the Chancellorship — an office no self-respecting government would have allowed him to occupy in the first place — followed a series of bizarre incidents. They included the eviction of a Ms Whiplash from the tenancy of his basement flat, the hiring of a libel lawyer at substantial public expense, an overspent credit card, and a purchase from the aforementioned urban vineyard. There was also the minor matter of the mismanagement of the nation's finances.

Some time later, Healey starred in the advert which was based on a joke at Lamont's expense. Most commentators saw Lamont's complaint as evidence of the Tories' lack of a sense of humour, something that scarcely required extensive proof. But Naughton pointed out that the incident's real significance lay in what it told us about Healey. The advert 'highlighted the depths to which "Lord Den" has sunk.'

'It is hard to believe,' Naughton went on, 'but this ludicrous old booby with eyebrows like copulating earwigs was once regarded as a serious politician. . .

TERRY BROTHERSTONE comments

He was seen as an intellectual heavyweight. . . . Indeed, there are still people who believe that Labour would be in power today if he had succeeded Jim Callaghan as leader.'

Naughton was writing about a culture which encourages apparently serious people to go 'whoring after popularity'.

My argument is a different one. It is that the decline of ex-Chancellor Healey is of some political significance. Amidst all the sleazy publicity Major's squalid little regime has attracted, it is easy to forget a more important issue. What will replace it?

The outcome of the forthcoming Eastleigh by-election, brought about by the culinary demise of Tory MP Stephen Milligan, may determine how openly the Labour leadership begins to campaign for a Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition.

But, even should Labour gain enough of the Hampshire vote to look on course for a parliamentary majority, commentators will rightly continue to point out that no one knows what a John Smith-led government will do. Lord Healey, although no longer a contender for office, remains a potent symbol of the crisis this represents.

IN 1976, with the Treasury under Healey's political stewardship, a definite period of British history came to an end.

Since the 1940s, social-democratic policies had been the norm. At their centre lay, not socialism, but the capitalist strategy of buying the stability of society at the price of providing ever-expanding social services.

The Labour party was the natural instrument for the implementation of this line, although Britain's residual imperial status, coupled with their own pragmatism, meant that the Tories, operating in the name of 'consensus', were able to remain in government for more than half of the period.

The mid 1970s saw the end of 'consensus'. In the initial skirmishes over what was to replace it, victory went to the working class. By 1976, sober commentators were speculating on the possibility that capitalist society in Britain was un-governable.

When a major financial crisis hit the Callaghan cabinet, it was only just over two years since Labour had been brought to office by the industrial action of the miners. Although Chancellor Healey loyally made the 'necessary' public spending cuts, this was not enough for the international financiers.

They required a demonstration that 'British democracy' could subvert the verdict of the 1974 general elections. The International Monetary Fund insisted on demonstrably taking over Healey's policy-making. What was involved was not merely a routine addition to the social democrats' record of betrayals, but a historic shift of policy.

As the 'Economist' put it, public finance had, since the war, been the servant of social policy. Now social policy was to be tailored to the availability of finance.

Healey's subsequent protest was only

that he had already done everything asked of him before the IMF so openly intervened.

His political emasculation in full view of the electorate had its purpose. From then on the Callaghan government, assisted by the TUC, was essentially about paving the way for what later became known as 'Thatcherism'.

In the 1980s Healey, the key figure in 1976, became an irrelevance. Opposition to the Tories passed out of parliament into some Labour-led council chambers, on to the picket lines, and to the streets. Bitter experiences were made, the lessons of which are still being learned.

No longer able to star as villain in the drama of contemporary labour history, 'Lord Den' was left to audition for a role as clown in the bourgeois circus. His supra-ocular hair became his major asset.

HEALEY'S loss of intellectual dignity may not be unique but it has been particularly spectacular. His personality no doubt furnishes part of the explanation. What is more important is that it symbolises and draws attention to the changes in social democracy itself.

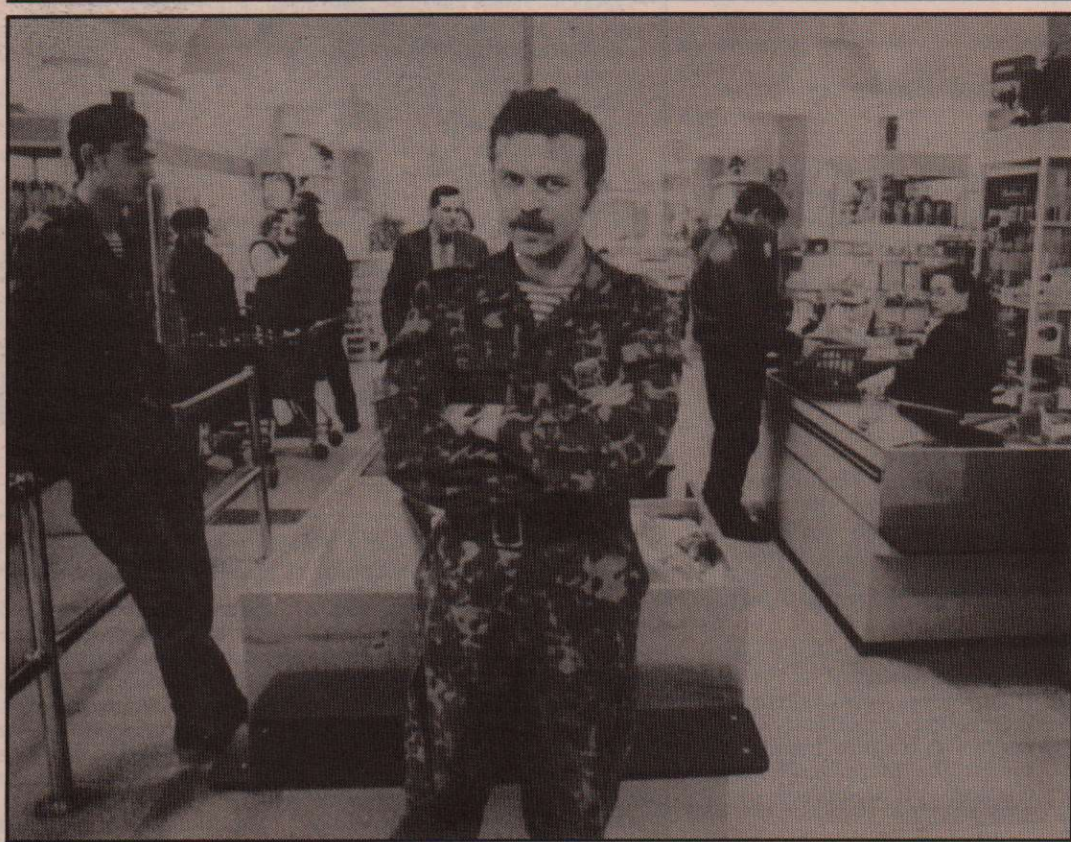
In the 'consensus' years there was a rationale underlying what in Britain became known as 'labourism'. In return for keeping the working class under control, Labour governments were permitted to enact real reforms which made life better for many people.

Stripped of this rationale the social democrats have no function other than a counter-revolutionary one. Healey himself may simply be a loose cannon exploding in his own face. But the cannons of the current Labour leadership are loaded with real ammunition and are pointed, not at the Tory enemy, but at the working class.

The antics of Old Earwigs are a joke containing a serious message. It is surely time to take it seriously by re-engaging in the discussion — begun in Workers Press recently — concerning the need to launch a new party of the working class.



Bosnia deal steps up pressure



Guards at a Moscow store, as mafia protection demands grow: Russia's situation will worsen

Russian 'reformer' warns of dictatorship

BY KEITH SCOTCHER

A FORMER Russian deputy prime minister, Boris Fyodorov, has attacked Western leaders and the IMF for not being 'really interested' in 'a normal democratic political system' in Russia.

In a 'Financial Times' article, Fyodorov says that the situation will be worsened now by the granting of an International Monetary Fund loan of \$1.5 billion — which is conditional on the government presenting the Russian parliament with a list of laws and decrees aimed at increasing budget income

through taxation and keeping down expenditure.

He says that the loan was '75 per cent political', and that there was no possibility of the Russian government staying within budget. Inflation would continue to grow.

Fyodorov, a 'reformer', complains that 'Western-type' economic policies are being abandoned with approval from the West.

Visit

He points to the recent visit to Russia of former US president Richard Nixon and his courting of Ruskoi and other leaders of the dispersed 1993

parliament. He also cites the issuing of visas to the fascist Zhirinovskiy.

It was Nixon who went to China in 1971 to sign the deals opening China to exploitation. The bureaucracy acted as a direct agent for imperialism, with its 'ready-made' dictatorship controlling the working class.

Fyodorov's fears for the future of 'democratic' capitalism in Russia are well-founded.

What imperialism wants to see most of all is a strong state able to suppress the working class. It is looking for those most able to provide it when Yeltsin has outlived his usefulness.

Ukraine miners to renew strike

UKRAINIAN miners are ready to resume their strike for unpaid wages and to solve other problems facing the industry.

Strike committees have met and voted to renew their strike, suspended last June. Two resolutions were agreed on, also containing a series of limited political demands.

That the payment of wages has not improved since last year's action is shown by one of the resolutions. This calls for the immediate payment in full of delayed wages for the first three months of 1994, as well as a guaranteed meeting of contracted wage deadlines by the 15th of each month.

The resolution calls for a one-day warning strike across the Ukrainian coal industry on 4 April, with a complete stoppage for one shift. This will be followed by recalled meetings of the strike committees and unions to co-ordinate further action.

The second resolution, which the strike committees stress is an integral part of their decisions, calls for the establishment of 'economically viable prices for coal', the discharging of debts accumulated during 1993 and the first quarter of this year, and a widening of the board of directors of the state coal company of Ukraine to include representatives of workplace collectives and the trades unions.

Demands

Again, this resolution calls for the retention 'with all their force' of the demands of the strike last year.

In an interesting development, the resolutions were signed by representatives of the Ukraine independent miners' union, the Donbas regional council of strike committees, the Donetsk municipal workers' strike committee, and the old 'official' Ukraine trade union of coal industry workers.

THE dangerous implications for the Bosnian people of the US-brokered 'federation' for their country are becoming clearer with moves to get the agreement of the Bosnian parliament for a new constitution.

Major concessions to the Bosnian Croat separatists were agreed by the Bosnian leaders at the US embassy in Vienna at the beginning of March as the price for US, Russian, and European Union backing for the deal.

The Bosnian president, Alija Izetbegovic, is to stand down and be replaced by a Croat nominee. Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic will remain, but with a Croat deputy. In addition, either the foreign or defence minister will be a Croat.

Serb nationalists still control 70 per cent of Bosnia. They have rejected proposals that they join the federation and continue to terrorise and murder Muslims and Croats in those areas.

The remaining 30 per cent of Bosnia will be landlocked, without access to the sea, and will have to rely on Croatia to allow flow of trade.

In the north the Bosnian army has gone on the offensive and captured important Serb-held positions, leading Radovan Karadzic, the fascist Bosnian-Serb leader, to declare: 'If the Muslims continue this offensive, I will order a counter-offensive and then they will not

be able to get territory which they might get through political negotiation.'

Meanwhile Serb forces continue to lay siege to Maglaj, looting a UN convoy and throwing medical supplies into a river.

Scrutiny

Serb nationalists are claiming the right to control some suburbs of Sarajevo. Access to these suburbs has only been allowed to men over 60 years old and women over 55, despite the much-lauded opening of the barriers by the UN. Names have to be submitted for scrutiny two weeks before the intended visit.

Serb forces retain control of the city's main water supply and gas pipeline. A reconstruction programme is proposed, but under UN supervision. 'It's going to be big, big money,' said a senior UN official. 'There's big bucks waiting to pour in here.'

Businessmen from the UK, Britain and France have been flown in by their military to look for contracts being awarded and so get their hands on the 'big bucks' being supplied by their own governments as 'aid'.

The EU has announced it is appointing an 'administrator' for Mostar, where Bosnian Muslims suffered a long siege by Croatian forces. The administrator is to be a German Social Democrat deputy. Only weeks ago German Social Democrats were involved in trying to expel 200,000 Bosnian refugees from Germany.

There are signs that concessions are being made to ethnic cleansing in the reported agreement between the Bosnian government and the Serb nationalists to exchange the Serb population of Zenica for the Muslim living in Banja Luka. This despite the determination of many of them to remain in their homes, defying all attempts to drive them out.

Federation is a step back

Discussion article on Bosnia by SIMON PIRANI

FIRSTLY, I think we must clarify our attitude to the Croatia-Bosnia federation.

In Workers Press 12 March, it was stated that talks on the federation were 'the result of the determined resistance of the Bosnian people to ethnic partition, and the victories won by the Bosnia-Herzegovina army against Croatian forces'.

Of course we don't agree with pessimists who believe that all history is decided by great-power diplomacy, and we recognise the importance of these victories. But they were *only one* of the factors which led to this agreement.

Coping

The fact is that the imperialists saw the Bosnia-Croatia deal as the best way of coping with the fact that Bosnia still exists (despite their own best efforts), and coping with other huge problems such as the crisis in Russia. And they got it.

Workers Press 19 March correctly stated that the deal will lead to 'the cantonisation of Bosnia' and 'leave intact the territory seized by the Serbian forces in their bloody war of conquest'. I think some people in the imperialist camp see the federation — which doesn't seem geographically or economically viable — as a stepping-stone to wiping Bosnia off the map all together.

By signing the deal, the Bosnian bourgeoisie has done what we warned it would do — manoeuvre with other bourgeois factions, and with imperialism, to try to save its own position.

The collaboration of the Bosnian government in this deal is not just a matter of 'dangerous

illusions'. It is acting in bourgeois class interests.

We must say clearly: before the deal, it was in the interests of the working class to side with this bourgeois government, to the extent that the government resisted the partition of Bosnia. Now, the working class will come more and more into direct conflict with that government.

Secondly, about the class relations within Bosnia and its army, and the effect of this deal on those relations.

Workers Press 5 March, before the deal, carried a very important report on the preparations to defend Tuzla by the workers there. It mentioned that the 2nd Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina army was working together with local organisations in this defence. And further, that the commander of this army 'has trained a people's army in the free territory, with the miners at its head', and that the citizens' assembly, local communities, etc., are all part of this force.

Since then the situation has changed, of course. The UN, with much hypocritical rhetoric, has opened Tuzla airport. As Workers Press 26 March pointed out, it is under the control of Russia, Serbia's closest ally.

What is the attitude of the various forces in Tuzla to these developments? I suppose the first concern of workers in the town is to get food for their families, and I don't pretend to know how that feels.

But it would be important to know: has there been any conscious expression by the workers of opposition to the UN and the Croatia-Bosnia federation which imperialism hopes to impose? And what about the 2nd Corps of the Bosnian army?

Have its links with the Tuzla workers caused it to express any opposition to the imperialist-backed federation? How does it react to the opening of Tuzla airport under UN control? How would its soldiers feel about being the soldiers of such a federation?

Every report of these developments will be invaluable.

I must say I was surprised at the use of the term 'free territory'. 'Free'? Surely the UN come and go in Tuzla at pleasure. Or not? I don't have any first-hand information.

Also, what do we mean by 'people's army'? Surely we're talking about a coalition of forces — the 2nd Corps, the town leadership, the miners, etc. This was, and is, a coalition of Bosnian bourgeois forces and Bosnian workers. But now internal conflict inherent in such an alliance will be created a thousandfold. If the deal has been signed on the White House lawn, it can surely only be a matter of time before this alliance breaks up.

Alliance

Until now, the Tuzla workers have been fighting alongside the Bosnian bourgeois government. By accepting the federation, the government implicitly turns its back on that alliance. The federation, I am sure, will favour more 'UN' (probably Russian) soldiers in Tuzla, the 'solution' of the refugee 'problem' by UN, and (inevitably) the arming of those workers who are armed.

For the working class, the federation is a backward step. The Workers International, so, loud and clear. The federation undermines the very working-class solidarity which it represents.

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