

South African elections were . . . STEP FORWARD FOR TROTSKYISM

TROTSKYISTS of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International are delighted with the response they got in the South African elections.

Standing in only two provinces, the candidates of the Workers International received almost 5,500 votes — 4,626 in Natal/KwaZulu and 855 in the Western Cape.

This result was greeted with great enthusiasm by our comrades at a post-election meeting.

The number of votes is considerably greater than well-established movements which received generous financial assistance from the state and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). This financial assistance was denied to the Workers International.

The dedicated group of comrades who achieved this result on a 'word of mouth campaign' in factories and ghettos. Without transport, financial assistance, an office or a telephone the workers and members of the organisation worked tirelessly. We spoke to hundreds of workers in factories, workshops, single-men hostels. With donations from members we printed 15,000 pamphlets which were distributed in factories and workplaces.

The fear of intimidation and physical assault from the National Freedom Party and vicious Stalinists who see our organisation as a threat to their bureaucratic monopolies did not stop our comrades.

Hundreds of workers read our pamphlet, which called for a workers' party, the withdrawal from the Congress of South African

From NELSON LANGA and
GOODNEWS KHUMALO
in DURBAN

Trade Unions from their alliance with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party and the nationalisation of the basic means of production and the land.

Hundreds of workers enthusiastically endorsed these suggestions together with our positions against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the State of Emergency in Natal. They also supported our stand for proletarian internationalism.

One could feel their zest for fresh revolutionary ideas, their anti-reformist vigour and their disillusionment with the trade union bureaucracy and the petty bourgeois politicians of the ANC and SACP.

These workers were warned that the new Government of National Unity (GNU) of the ANC and the racist National Party will oppress the workers and will do its best to satisfy big capital and international imperialism, the IMF, the World Bank and the US's 'New World Order'. This needs to be challenged by a revolutionary work-

ers' party of the masses.

Hundreds of workers understood the message in the factories and expressed strong feelings of solidarity. Many demanded membership forms for the Workers International and asked our activists whether a new trade union based on revolutionary principles could be built.

The comrades in Natal/KwaZulu are now determined to continue the struggles for the building of a workers' party, working-class solidarity and unity.

Above all we know that our votes came from politically conscious workers on the shopfloor from throughout the province. We are committed to harnessing this support and transforming it into a living material revolutionary force.

■ The Workers List electoral alliance, composed mainly of Neville Alexander's Workers Organisation for Socialist Action, stood nationally but received only 4,100 votes.

It was supported by 'left' groups that did not back the African National Congress. No 'left' group backed the Workers International. Workers List had the benefit of considerable state funds for its campaign — at least half-a-million rand, and probably considerably more.

The Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International had no such funds. It was able to print two election leaflets and make a number of TV appearances. All its limited money was raised from the working class.

All the other 'left' groups, some calling themselves Trotskyist, gave the ANC critical support.

South Africa election appeal continues!

£2,000 needed immediately

We are sure that all our members, supporters and readers of Workers Press are proud of the achievements of our South African comrades, who have put up such a big fight, and will want to support them.

Please help in any way you can with donations, large or small, from each according to their ability. Our comrades in

South Africa need money to build on the magnificent gains that have been made for the movement during the election campaign and to tidy up some election expenses still outstanding.

Please send money, payable to the 'Workers International', to PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB, so we can rush it to our comrades.



Demonstration in Sarajevo last month against the murderous assault by Bosnian Serbs on the town of Gorazde, and the UN's treachery. Workers Aid for Bosnia is putting an emergency resolution on Gorazde to this week's annual conference of UNISON, the public sector union (see advert of conference lobby on this page).

■ Bosnia hostage drama, back page.

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

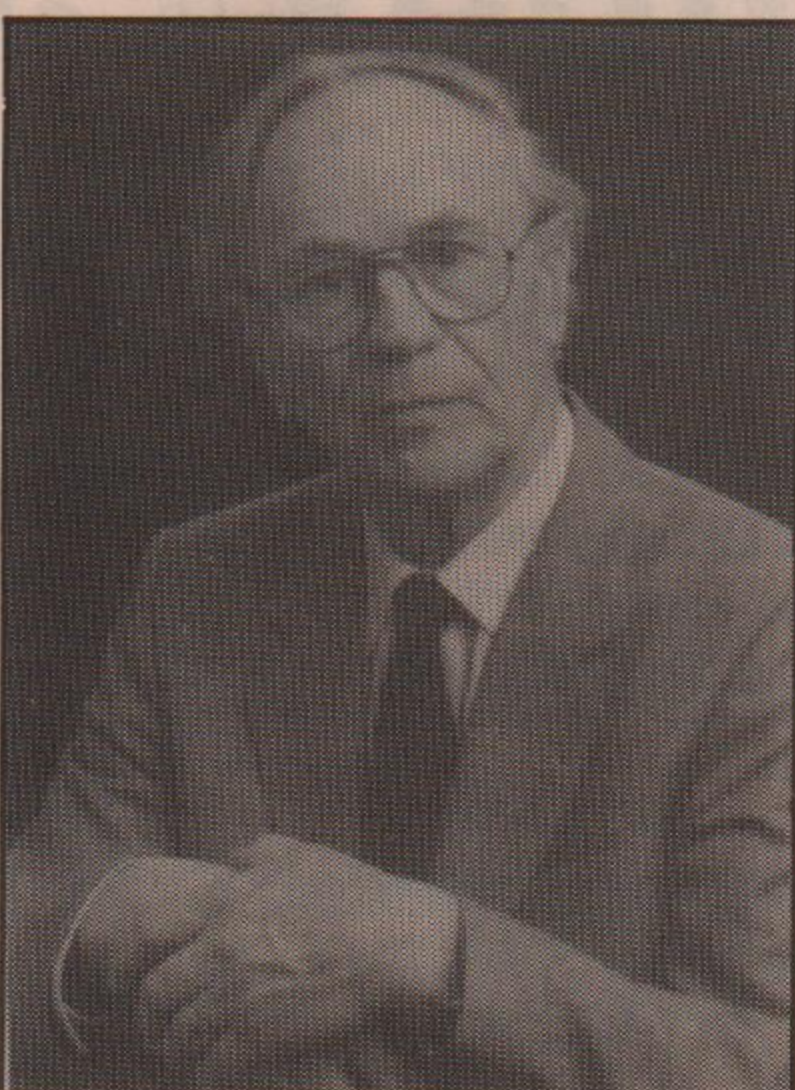
Memorial Meeting

Tom Kemp
1921-1993

Conway Hall
100 Old 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.



Workers Aid for Bosnia



Lobby UNISON conference! Support Workers Aid resolution

A member of Workers Aid is to seek to move an emergency resolution — on the murderous attack on the Bosnian city of Gorazde — at the annual conference in Bournemouth of public sector union, UNISON, Britain's largest union.

Lobby on Monday 16 May

Transport leaves London at 6.30am from Bond Way Business Centre, 69-71 Bond Way, Vauxhall, SW8.

Fringe conference meeting: 1pm-2pm at Pinehurst Hotel, West Cliff Gardens, Bournemouth.

On other pages:

No illusions in local elections, p2

Elections in Sheffield and Tower Hamlets, p3

Danger to workers of popular front in Brazil; Goya exhibition at Royal Academy, p4&5

Italian fascists threaten Slovenia; Chinese workers fight back; Russian economy grinding to a halt, p7

The elections: no illusions

THE Labour Party leaders did their best to present the results of the recent local council elections as a 'great victory' for their party. They were nothing of the sort.

Consider the conditions under which the elections took place. The Tory government is in chaos, with leading Tories predicting that the party will break in two over the question of Europe. A bitter struggle over who will succeed Major once he is kicked out is being fought in full public view.

For the Tories the election was a disaster. In many parts of the country they were all but wiped out, losing control of areas they have held in some cases for the best part of a century.

But they remain in government. Why? Because of the complete lack of opposition from the 'official' leaders of the labour movement. And the council elections have done not a single thing to change that situation.

Labour fought the elections on the basis that they could out-do the Tories in cutting local expenditure. 'Labour provides cheaper services than the Tories' was their slogan. The message is clear: where Labour councils have been returned there will be no respite from cuts and the destruction of local services.

* * * * *

THE election returns show that in many towns Labour lost ground to the Liberal Democrats.

As we report on page 3, in former strongholds such as Sheffield, Labour lost significant numbers of seats to the Liberals, as they did in Islington. In Oldham, the Liberal Democrats increased their representation on the council and Labour lost overall control. The Liberals made similar gains in Liverpool and in Lambeth — where the Labour bureaucracy has carried out a systematic witch-hunt against the left in the party. In Lambeth Labour lost control of the council.

What this shows is that Labour is quite unable to win the backing of those millions of middle-class people bitterly disillusioned with the Tories. They understandably have no confidence in the ability of the Labour Party to tackle the many pressing problems they have. Many voted Liberal Democrat — a party that is all things to everybody — as a protest against the Tories.

* * * * *

NOR can the election be seen as a 'great victory against the fascists', as groups such as the Socialist Workers Party pretend.

In the first place, fascism can never be defeated through the ballot box. The fascist threat can be tackled only through the mobilisation of the working class around a socialist policy and the organisation of workers' defence squads to drive the fascists off the streets.

In any case, as our correspondent points out on page 3, the fascists actually increased their votes in the Isle of Dogs election. The fascist British National Party lost the only seat it held there because of a big vote against it that went to the Labour Party.

But it was a vote against the fascists rather than a positive vote for Labour, who, as many workers know, have no policies to deal with the social crisis in the inner cities, which is the breeding ground for the racists and fascists.

The political situation is characterised by a ruling class whose crisis deepens by the day and a working class without effective leadership. The election results have done nothing to alter this.

Letters

Fraud? It's just good business

THE Tory government's National Audit Office (NAO) has refused to say whether the accounts of the same government's 'National Insurance Agency' are 'free from material uncertainty'.

In the course of 118,000 visits to employers last year the NAO found £89 million of underpayment by those employers.

The Inland Revenue also paid a number of visits to employers, finding tax underpayments totalling £48 million.

Nobody has so far put a value on a further 9 million errors revealed by investigators' computers. Two million of these errors were so serious that they are being looked into further.

Out of a sample of 10,000 visits made to employers' premises, the proportion making correct contributions was found to be only between 30 per cent and 40 per cent. The NAO also reveals that, in the checks it made on 30,000 sick-pay and maternity arrangements, between 25 per cent and 30 per cent were found to be wrong.

Britain's highest-spending quango, the £2.4 billion Housing Corporation, is found by the NAO to have 'lax financial control'.

In one fraud involving £600,000 in a north London housing trust, the fraud went on for seven years before the manager fled to Thailand, where he still lives.

Half of the housing trusts failed to submit their accounts by the deadline.

Richard Wilson, permanent secretary at the Department of the Environment, has admitted that he's worried about the fraud, but has implied that there is little that can be done to prevent it happening again.

There are now 2,300 housing associations, 600 of which are being financed to build new houses.

The Housing Corporation

was set up to take over the public housing sector, so as to remove it from the control of those who have to stand for election.

The prospect of getting their hands on public funds, and using them for their own business, is something Tory Party supporters cannot resist. They don't see it as fraud — it's just good business.

So if you take income tax and national insurance contributions from your workers, and you fail to hand it all over to the appropriate government departments, that's good business too! These people don't see the theft of other people's money as fraud — just good business.

That, of course, is the way capitalism works. And the heads of the civil service don't see how — or maybe don't see why — they should do anything about it.

Every day it becomes clearer that working men and women need to take control of all these functions, not just so as to stop the fraud but also to give first priority to the whole community's interests and well-being.

A Labour government cannot possibly reform such a system. Working people must take control of their own affairs, and their own destiny.

Peter Gibson
Croydon

Flagging a concern

FROM a reading of 'Thoughts on May Day' (Workers Press, 7 May), it appears that the WRP has abandoned the red flag of the international working-class movement for the national flag of Bosnia-Herzegovina (see last week's front page picture).

The debate about the removal of the symbol of the Fourth International from the masthead of Workers Press was instigated, if I remember correctly, because Hungarian miners saw only the hammer and sickle, reminding them of Stalinism. Is there now to be a debate whether to remove the schema-

tic red flag from the present masthead?

While respecting the sensibilities of others, it is surely necessary for the party, and the Workers International, to retain its own identity.

Geoff Thurley
London SE13



Bosnian flag on May Day: don't forget the red flag

Penchant for nit-picking

BRIAN PEARCE ('Letters', 23 April) has a penchant for historical nit-picking that is matched only by his inability to get his facts straight.

He states correctly that Greece's frontier with what is now the Republic of Macedonia was fixed by the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913, but forgets that this frontier was called into question at the Paris peace negotiations in 1919 by Bulgaria, which claimed large parts of Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia on the grounds that they were inhabited by Bulgarians.

US President Woodrow Wilson had some sympathy with this claim, but was overruled by his fellow Allied leaders. The Versailles settlement thus reconfirmed Greece's frontier with Serbia/Yugoslavia, as well as extending Greece's frontier

at Bulgaria's expense. 'Greece's Versailles frontiers' were thus the Greek frontiers recognised under the Versailles settlement.

In an earlier letter (6 November), Pearce did not 'merely point out' that Greek Macedonia had a Greek majority after 1922, as he now claims. He specifically attacked the Communist International resolution of 1924 calling for a 'United Independent Macedonia' on the ground that it offended Greek nationalist sensibilities. It is legitimate for Marxists to disagree with this resolution, but not on the basis of defending Greek nationalism.

Finally, I am well aware that Greeks are not Slavs. I consider it likely, however, that given the present constellation of forces in Balkan politics, Pearce's defence of Greek and Serbian nationalism could lead him to defend Russian nationalism as well.

Attila Hoare
Cambridge

Other side of 'Citizen Locke'

THE English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) may have been 'the reluctant father of Western democracy' (JJ, 'Programme guide', 30 April); that's a matter of opinion.

But three things about Locke are matters of fact: that his 'Essay concerning Human Understanding' (1690) provided some of the conceptual building-blocks used in the elaboration of racist ideology; that Locke justified slavery on the ground that slaves were captives taken in 'just wars'; and that he had no reluctance about investing £600 in the Royal African Company, whose purpose was to acquire slaves in Africa and sell them to British and Spanish buyers in the Caribbean.

Fred Potter
London N6

WORKERS PRESS £3,000 MONTHLY FUND

In so far for May: £709.55

THE 'finance department' tells me that things are rather critical at the moment. There have been some generous 'one-off' donations recently: the fund figure includes £246.50 collected at a party national aggregate last weekend; and we thank a supporter in the west of Scotland for £1,000 and a similar figure for the Workers International, which will be coming shortly.

But there remain bills and debts outstanding — some to members of the party and to sympathisers. This money is needed just to 'stand still'. But, let us think how the party can make the necessary changes to move forward — and I don't mean just financially, after all, 'money' for us is a means to an end, not the end itself!

There has been some slow but steady progress in postal subscriptions. Now often people — friends, fellow workers, trade union comrades, etc. with whom we work in the working-class movement — just need a word or two to take out a sub. Try it. Be cheeky and ask for an extra monthly donation. Get really bold and ask them to join the party — warts and all!

The WRP/Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International has some influence in the working-class movement in Britain and the world that none of the revisionist groups have — this despite the fact that these groups are often much bigger numerically. What is the difference? I would say that it is, at least in part and to a greater or lesser extent at various periods, owing to the historical fight carried out by the Trotskyist movement, represented by the WRP and its predecessors in Britain, against Stalinism and the damage it did to consciousness in the workers' movement. This was expressed by Trotsky: 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.'

But the WRP has to a certain extent been in political exile from the working-class movement, sending dispatches and organising in it to only a limited extent. But with the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the former Soviet Union, the opportunity now arises of coming home, so to speak, to be truly part of the working-class movement and to remove the barnacle-like crumbling remnants of Stalinism. This means to finish with talk of the 'crisis of leadership' and actually resolving the crisis by leading, giving confidence to the working class to act and build its organisations in its own interest and lead in its own right the revolutionary fight against capitalism for socialism.

In the final analysis, this is the only way to resolve the financial crisis of the WRP, or any successor that may come out of it in the changing forms of our work.

Come and join us by participating in this and contributing financially to what we're doing.

Mike Cooke

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

COMING SOON

Construction Safety Campaign Diary

SATURDAY 21 MAY CSC annual general meeting. 10.30am-5pm, Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Road, London NW5.

TUESDAY 14 JUNE St Pancras coroner's court, Camley Street, London NW1 (tel. 071-387 4884), 9.30am. Inquest into death of John McLaughlin (45), killed when roof collapsed in January. Christopher Nelson (48) was severely injured. They were working on extension to car showroom in Finchley Road.

WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE St Pancras coroner's court, Camley Street, London NW1 (tel. 071-387 4884), 9am. Inquest into death of Tony Fishenden (27), killed in August 1992 while carrying a scaffold pole near a railway line; a passing train caused the electric current to arc to the pole. Family's solicitor requested that the BR director for safety be put in dock, but the coroner refused. After judicial review the case has been put back to the coroner. DPP turned down a manslaughter investigation. Inquest may be interrupted by further challenges from family solicitor.

Index Bookcentres

Central London
28 Charlotte Street,
London W1P 1HJ
071-636 3532

Brixton
10-12 Atlantic Road,
London SW9 8HY
071-242 6342

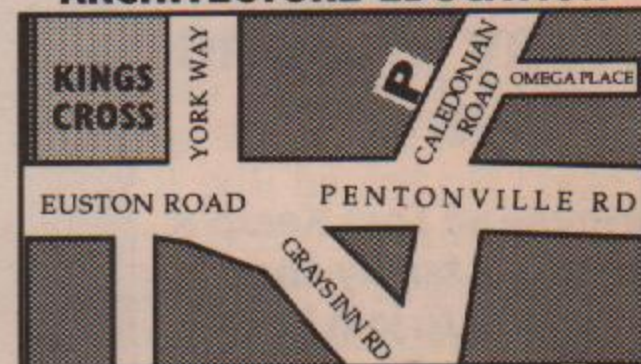
Trotskyist bookshop
Fast order service



BookCELLAR

Secondhand basement bookstore

POLITICS FICTION ARTS MEDIA
WOMEN'S STUDIES FILM
ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION



OPEN 11AM - 6PM MON. TO SAT.
BELOW HOUSMANS BOOKSHOP
5 CALEDONIAN ROAD KINGS CROSS
LONDON N1 9DX.

• TEL: 071 837 4473 •

Sheffield: the real Netherthorpe story

BY TOM OWEN

THE Liberal-Democrats have won 11 seats in the Sheffield council elections: eight from the Labour Party, three from the Tories.

Labour took back Brightside, one of their heartland wards, and the Tories lost all their contested seats.

Local press and television have detected a political 'tide of change', cautiously celebrating the beginning of the end of Labour hegemony in the city.

Superficially, the inroads made by the Liberals have been seen as the inevitable corrosion of traditional working-class loyalties, a pragmatic response to the massacre of traditional industries and the city council's opportunism and buffoonery.

However, a closer reading of the results shows a different picture. There's a huge swathe of Labour gold on the city map: starting from the north-west, in the rural South Wortley ward.

It can be sure it has more support than people in its fold. But the industrial village of Stocksbridge, once the site of one of Europe's largest steel complexes, was held by the Liberal-Democrats.

As we move down the Don valley, the picture looks grimmer for the Labour Party. They lost Hillsborough, former parliamentary seat of the 'left' Labourite Martin Flannery.

Hillsborough has become a marginal seat, partly because of the government's boundary-fixing and in this election because of popular anger at the insensitive handling of the massive disruption caused by the super-tram project.

Labour's most critical ward was the inner-city ward, Netherthorpe, where Labour group leader Mike Bower was standing alongside another candidate, ex-steelworker Mike Smith.

Notorious

Netherthorpe became briefly the centre of national media attention because it lost one of its seats to a Liberal Democrat.

The ward consists of a large inner-city housing estate which includes the notorious Kelvin complex as well as some 19th-century artisan streets.

Recent city council social services surveys have indicated that Netherthorpe has the greatest levels of deprivation in the city and possibly in the country. Yet one of the astonishing statistics, among many that are produced about this community, is that it has a

relatively low crime rate.

I believe that one of the key factors in this complex political and social situation is the role of the community's leadership, the Netherthorpe Tenants' Association, consisting of members of former engineering and steelworking families but led by some remarkable women who have fought for their community in the best traditions of the working class.

They have resisted school closures and rent increases and have organised adult education programmes, literacy projects, and youth clubs.

Significantly, there is no overt fascist intervention in this multi-ethnic area.

I believe it was the decision of a key group of these women to produce a leaflet supporting the Labour candidate that saved Mike Bower's bacon — but failed to deliver for the aspiring Mike Smith.

Safe

Bower's seat was a Labour sinecure: a safe seat. He was 'given'... Netherthorpe after a vicious witch-hunt of the 'Trotskyist' 'Socialist Organiser' middle-class entrism group; but ironically he is more unpopular than them, because of his perceived aloofness and arrogance.

The decision of the Tenants' association, albeit in a private

capacity, to endorse Bower was not a result of the disintegration of working-class morale but of a real crisis of class leadership.

Silvia Andriotti, the successful Lib-Dem candidate, had the same adult education as the key Netherthorpe tenants, and they would have been genuinely horrified at the prospect of Lib-Dem populism running wild on their estates.

Decay

As Workers Press has pointed out in reference to Tower Hamlets, populist groupings are making a meal of the decay of Labourism.

Andriotti would not have won her seat, in fact, but for the distractions of the several exotic 'green' candidates, one of whom, standing for the 'Allotment Party', put forward the inadvertently honest slogan: 'Vote Vegetable.' The 'Allotment' candidate came bottom with 86 votes, some 30 votes behind the Tory.

The dramatic shift from Labour in its heartlands doesn't necessarily mean a drift to populism and a loosening of class loyalties.

On the contrary, the Netherthorpe experience shows that the working class is experiencing a real crisis of direction and leadership. That crisis needs urgent resolution.

'Never mind the deaths, just count the profits'

BY ROY THOMAS

THE 'unlawfully killed' verdict on the US tourists who met their deaths in the M2 coach crash puts the spotlight on who was responsible for a coach with a known brake defect being on the road.

Gareth Williams QC, former chair of the Bar Council, said: 'An inquest's findings no longer have any direct legal implications in terms of crime.'

However, the inquest did hear the following evidence:

■ THAT the driver, 54-year-old Leslie Gold, was due to start a rest period on the day of the crash, and had had only four and three-quarter hours' sleep the night before;

■ THAT the regular driver of this coach had been reporting that the anti-lock brakes and speed limiter had not been working for 13 months before the vehicle crashed on the M2;

■ THAT the Travellers Coach Company, which operated the coach, had complained in writing to the manufacturers in February 1994 that there were faults in 'most of the fleet's anti-lock brake system'. (The law on this is very clear: if the anti-lock braking system isn't working, then the vehicle must not be in service);

■ THAT the coach was speeding at 78mph because the speed limiter fitted to the coach as required by law, to restrict it to 70mph, had been disconnected;

■ THAT a number of other coaches in the company's Hounslow (west London) depot were found by inspectors to be

without working speed limiters.

This is a company that is said to be at the 'top end of the luxury coach market'. It is believed to be not alone in regular breaches of safety laws.

In the week of the inquest national daily newspapers reported National Express coaches with speed limiters set at 75mph instead of 70mph — and double-decker coaches speeding at 80-90mph on motorways.

Terry Gold, brother of the driver who died in the crash, was very critical of the company's safety record. In interviews after the hearing he said his brother had complained over the pressures being put on him to work longer hours.

Greedy

It is only by breaking the law on speed limits, and on the length of time a driver can safely drive, that bus and coach companies can make the extra profits they are greedy for.

Increased productivity and profit can only be achieved by increasing the speed, and by keeping drivers of vans, lorries, buses and coaches on the road for longer hours. But, as we saw in the M2 coach crash, this costs lives.

It also has a long-term, impact on drivers' health. Leslie Gold had exceeded his driving-hours on the day before the crash, and had had very little sleep before he was back at work on a vehicle with no speed limiter and with defective brakes.

Here is another industry where it's a case of 'Never mind the deaths, just count the profits'.

After the Tower Hamlets election . . . No room for complacency

BY DOUG KYDD

A HUGE turn-out on the Isle of Dogs in last week's local election saw the defeat of the fascists and helped wipe out the Liberal Democrats in Tower Hamlets.

Sensing the danger from the British National Party, an unprecedented 67 per cent of the electorate turned out in Millwall elections which usually arouse little interest and see a turnout of no more than 40 per cent.

But the local Labour Party's boasting over the BNP's defeat was misplaced. In defeat the fascists managed to poll over 28 per cent of the votes cast in the three Millwall seats they contested. In Bethnal Green (Globe ward) they won about 20 per cent of the vote.

In fact the BNP has built up a large support and the potential for more in the coming months.

The social problems which cause this support will not go away, and the danger of racist attacks remains.

The local Bengali community will not need to be warned about this, having been here before in the late 1970s. They should be warned about their erstwhile supporters, however.

The Anti-Nazi League's politics are the politics of crude deduction: 'We have defeated the BNP in Millwall and the Liberals in Tower Hamlets, and Labour is now in power. Time to put our paste-pots and posters away until next time.'

These middle-class warriors will not be around when the next young Bengali is hospitalised or worse.

The problems that remain after the election are shown by the dismaying figures for unemployment in Tower Hamlets, released last week.

Almost a quarter of the

population — a total of 16,383 — is unemployed. In Poplar's Lansbury ward 38.9 per cent of men are without work.

In this economic climate the views of the BNP fester and take root.

Defeat

The borough-wide defeat of the Liberals will be widely welcomed in Tower Hamlets. For over eight years they have wallowed in corruption (in the running of local markets) and racism, attacking education, sacking school dinner-ladies, viciously enforcing the collection of poll tax, continuing to employ the contractors responsible for the deaths of three young men, refusing to allow the use of local parks to trade unionists, and distributing racist leaflets.

From their previous majority, they have been reduced to just seven seats.

The scale of Labour's victory has thrown John Biggs, leader of the Labour group, into a state.

Clearly believing that his task was just to defeat the BNP, he was unprepared for the electorate giving an overwhelming mandate for Labour's promises to be carried out.

Perhaps it's not surprising that Mr Biggs should be cautious, given the expectations raised by the result, and the problems facing workers in Tower Hamlets.

For local trade unionists and activists the message must be to continue building on the links made in the last year; to campaign immediately for the opening of unemployment centres; to campaign against the Labour Party as soon as it begins to break its promises (as it will); above all, to discuss with the working class on the Isle of Dogs (including BNP voters) the lessons of the election and that area's ongoing problems.

Leicester Education Alliance conference

The Degrading of Knowledge in Education

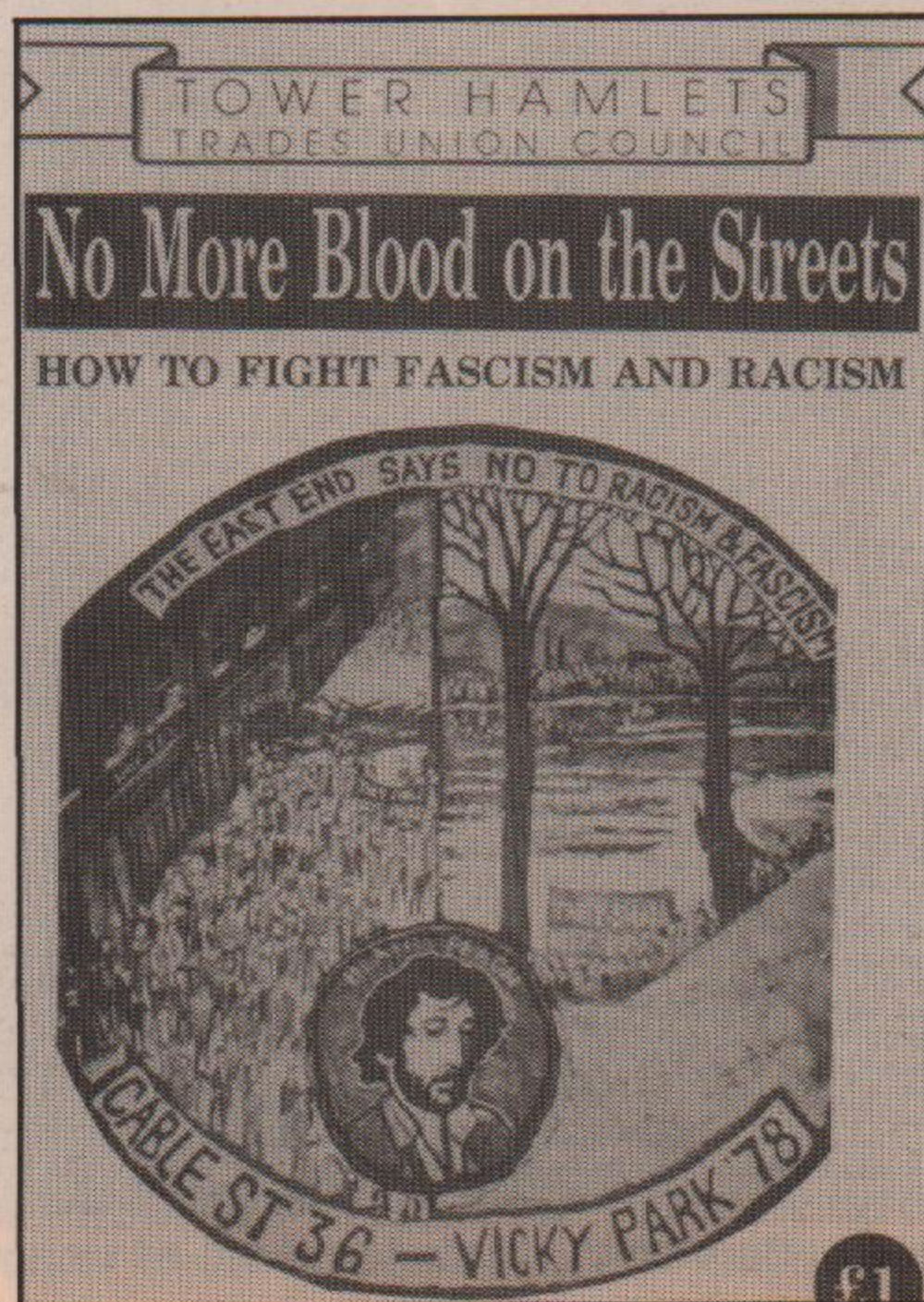
Saturday 21 May, 10.30am-4pm

Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester

Details from Paul Henderson, Department of Sociology, Leicester University, Leicester LE1 7RH (0533 707730 or 0533 522748)

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 Council, Davenant Centre, 179-181 Whitechapel Road, London E1.

Price £1 plus 25p postage.



WORKERS AID meetings

London Committee
Monday 23 May, 7.30pm

Queen's Head pub, Acton St (off Gray's Inn Rd) near King's Cross station

National Steering Committee
Saturday 21 May, 1.00pm

Manchester Town Hall

REVELL & GEORGE SUPPORT GROUP DEFEND RON SENCHAK SUPPORT THE RIGHT TO PICKET

Since 30 March 1993 Revell & George Printers has been in official dispute with the GPMU union, after locking out and sacking union members. Pickets have faced continual harassment by the police, being arrested on the flimsiest of charges. Ron Senchak, the FoC (shop steward), is convicted of nothing, yet has been banned from the picket line. Ron appears this week in the Crown court facing trumped-up charges of assaulting a scab while defending himself. Ensure Ron gets maximum support and demonstrate outside the court.

Liverpool Crown court,
Derby Square, Liverpool
Begins Monday 16 May

Picket phone: 0860-337113

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the WRP

Name date

Address

Trade union (if any) Age (if under 21)

Send to: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

Inside left

Birthday boy

THE 'Guardian' had a cartoon on 10 April: 'Happy Birthday' — Adolf Hitler rubbing his hands over a blazing cake called 'Gorazde'.

One fascist leader who will have rejoiced as Serb artillery battered that Bosnian town was celebrating his birthday in Moscow the other week: Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who advocates the destruction of Bosnia's Muslims as well as the expulsion of Russia's Jews.

Guests at the Russian Nazi's dinner reportedly included representatives of the embassies of Serbia, Iraq and North Korea. Political psychopaths of the world unite? Iraqi and Kurdish workers will be relieved to hear that Zhirinovsky has, for the time being, earned down an invitation from Saddam Hussein to visit Baghdad.

What would 'New Worker', paper of the New Communist Party, say? Continuing the worst features of the old Communist Party, it has added more. The 'Morning Star', while defending Serb aggression (see Workers Press 30 April), was caught on the spot when Russia's deputy foreign minister, Churkin, criticised Bosnian Serb nationalist leader Radovan Karadzic's intransigence.

Not so the 'New Worker', which is new better than to expect a firm stand from the Kremlin. 'In Moscow, the Yeltsin regime is trying to end off the nationalist and patriotic bloc in parliament by posing as the defender of Serb rights — while in practice doing everything it can to back the Clinton call.'

The Russian government has made a half-hearted intervention, calling for an international peace conference on Bosnia, and Moscow has appealed for "consultation" ... 'New Worker', 22 April).

There's nothing half-hearted about 'New Worker's' support for the Serbian regime — 'the last socialist state in Europe' — 'Democratic Korea', or Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq.

Hence perhaps that respectful euphemism it uses for the fascist Zhirinovsky and his Stalinist allies: 'the nationalist and patriotic bloc'. Doggedly following their own ultrastalinist path, that's where this bunch of 'old believers' has ended up.

Sez Des

TUC general secretary John Monks' enthusiasm for political pluralism extends to awarding the 50,000 public relations account for the TUC's relaunch to Burston-Marsteller, the agency of Liberal Democrat Des Wilson.

'The former director of Shelter and Friends of the Earth now boasts that he is "one of the highest paid public affairs consultants" in the business, but is less forthcoming about his agency's most famous clients: Erich Honecker, Argentinian torturer General Jorge Videla and Union Carbide of the Bhopal disaster' ('Brothers, Can you Spare the Time', 'Casablanca' magazine, Spring 1994).

Less well-paid TUC HQ staff indicate money's short. All kinds of committees are being 'streamlined' out of the trade union calendar. But aside from the above-named disasters, isn't money in Des Wilson's account well spent?

Not if 'Casablanca' is right about the Russian experience. In 1992, it says, Burston-Marsteller won a half-million-pound contract to publicise an extravaganza called 'Red Square Invites'. Altogether £3.5 million was invested on this 'first major demonstration of the new Russia's entrepreneurial spirit'.

Publicity was less than impressive, 'Casablanca' says, and 'worldwide ticket sales barely reached double figures'; even official patron Boris Yeltsin didn't show up.

Charlie Pottins

Danger to workers' popular front in

Brazil faces a period of turmoil as the ruling class fears the consequences of a Workers Party victory in the coming elections. This is despite the moving to the right of that party and its reformist programme.

The ruling class is frightened that

the expectations of millions of people will be raised if the Workers Party wins — expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

BILL HUNTER, who is a leading member of the International Workers League (LIT), currently in Brazil, explains

ACCORDING to the Brazilian government, 43 million Brazilians, including 18 million children, live in absolute poverty with a monthly family income equivalent to less than US\$15. In Rio de Janeiro, a third of the population lives in slums and children sleep in doorways of shops and churches.

There are estimated to be 7 million 'street children' in Brazil. In one wealthy district of Rio — Ipanema — there are iron bars around the parks to prevent children from entering.

Police death-squads murder groups of children. 'Brazil has found a new way of taking its children off the streets — killing them,' said an Amnesty International advertisement five years ago.

Lula (Luis Inacio Lula da Silva), leader of the Workers Party and former metalworker, is front-

runner for the presidential elections in October. Polls show him leading by 35 points to 20. The 'Financial Times' on 29 April reported that he faced a largely hostile media:

'Although Mr da Silva is a moderate, the media and his opponents are playing on the public's perception that his party is full of radicals who threaten to shatter Brazil's consensus politics by introducing controversial change.'

'Consensus'

Lula and his faction — the Articulation — which leads the Workers Party, have been moving the party to the right in the last few years, and towards essentially 'consensus' politics.

Convergência Socialista — the biggest Trotskyist organisation in Brazil, and a section of the LIT-CI

(International Workers League-Fourth International) — correctly warns of the danger of a popular-front government following the election of Lula as president. It calls on the workers and peasants to demand a government of their own organisations.

The Workers Party attended the meeting in the Cuban capital, Havana, of the 'Forum of Sao Paulo' last year, the tone of which was set by Fidel Castro declaring: 'There do not exist the subjective and objective conditions for socialism'.

Lula recently overturned the party's traditional position, that a Workers Party government would declare a moratorium on the country's foreign debt. The Workers Party now has a programme for government which is thoroughly reformist.

In fact, its phraseology is more

'moderate' than that of the ill-fated Allende government in Chile, overthrown by a CIA-backed military coup in the 1970s.

This did not prevent the July 1993 issue of 'International Viewpoint', journal of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), declaring that the national conference of the Workers Party (WP) last year, which adopted the programme, was a historic conference that ratified 'an explicitly class-struggle, democratic and popular orientation of the party, as well as an agreement on anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist reforms and against big landowners'.

This line, the journal said, 'synthesises' (it would be more correct to say makes an amalgam of) the 'line' of four factions in the WP, one of which is attached to the USec.

An article by Joao Machado in the December issue of 'International Viewpoint', about the Workers Party and the elections, stated that the programme on which the WP would be fighting the elections would not be socialist. He declared: 'One of the consequences of the crisis of the "Eastern Bloc" countries is that socialism is confronted with a generalised "crisis of credibility".'

He said that there was a 'tremendous — and justified — suspicion of nationalisation', and supported the 'decentralisation' of the state, so far as possible, and



Detail from one of Goya's 'Capricho' panels (1815-19) of victims of the Inquisition wearing dunces' hats

Goya

'Truth and Fantasy', exhibit Goya's small works, Royal Academy London, until 12 June

GOYA was a great painter because he surpassed himself. Although a firm technician, we remember him for the humanist content of his work. From light to darkness as a chronicle of his turbulent age. All this is revealed in the Royal Academy exhibition of his small works, 'Truth and Fantasy'. On the one hand, he made the small canvas his own art in its own right; on the other, he often much truth — in allegorical form — in the fantasy.

Goya loved money and was associated with the business world of the 18th-century and early-19th-century. He was a friend of high society. As a painter of the Spanish court, he was ordered to produce official portraits; also decorated the royal tapestries. He painted tapestries and frescoes for churches. The mature Goya was also the creator of 'The Caprices' (1799), a series of 80 drawings in opposition to the revival of the neoclassical style. One of these is called 'The Reason Produces Monsters'. Like the etchings and the dark, terrifying 'Disasters of War' (1810-20).

The exhibition opens with a self-portrait of the artist as a young man; it is followed by another self-portrait from late in his life, which quickly passes the commissioner's eye. The artist for the royal tapestry factory (Goya was a rococo in style, depicting the four seasons and moves swiftly past the

Workers of Brazil

'social forms of control over the State developed to the fullest'.

Some USec leaders uncritically support such a reformist programme against 'neo-liberalism' and thus postpone socialist demands. Others, like Mandel, equivocate.

The CUT union federation came out of the workers' upsurge at the beginning of the 1980s — as did the Workers Party — and is led by the Articulation faction of the WP (although the Convergência Socialista has had 10 per cent of the delegates at conference and could muster 40 per cent in a left front).

Austerity

The CUT has moved to the right and its leadership has weakened its opposition to the austerity plan demanded by the International Monetary Fund. It has linked up with the north American CIO/AFL union federation and the World Federation of Trade Unions.

However, as in the case of Allende, the capitalists and the landowners — both imperialist and native — are concerned about the forces behind Lula, the great mass of Brazil's hungry, poor and exploited masses, with their expectations from a Lula government. Inflation is running at 47 per cent, with the prices of some products rising as much as 202 per cent. Last year the number of strikes in Brazil was higher than in 1992 — the numbers of workers involved

rose from 2,562,385 to 3,595,770.

This year there has been a significant upsurge of workers' struggles against the government's austerity plan of wage freezes and unemployment. In some cases workers have been striking against dismissals and in others against delays in the payment of wages. In early March there were strikes by rubber workers, metalworkers, oilworkers, state workers and students.

The CUT is being pushed towards declaring a plan of struggle and a one-day general strike. With the military watching in the wings, some very serious political questions are posed.

Explosion

Even a day's general strike will pose for the military, the state, the government, and the thoroughly corrupt ruling class the danger of an explosion of the masses in a society riven with tensions. They will be more than nervous of what a Lula victory will raise. The idea of a pre-emptive coup will begin to circulate.

The important question is the developing of workers' and peasants' committees of unity, defence and control — unity between factory committees, regions of the union, etc., linking with the neighbourhoods to organise the general strike and as preparation for a workers' and peasants' government.



Some of Sao Paulo's poor hunting through a rubbish tip (top): 43 million live in absolute poverty in Brazil. There are 7 million 'street children' in Brazil, like these (above) in Recife

Goya: painter of terror and splendour

tion of Academy,

cause he painter for the moved nicher of led in the is small the one work of there is form —

ely asso- of late-ry Spain. painter obliged to signs for ed altar too. Yet creator of etchings - Inquisi- Sleep of er came le paint- 0-20). -portrait nds with life. One designs these are seasons), religious

sketches; but not before pausing to smile at 'Cat at Bay' (up in a tree, a dog at the foot of the tree, and one or two bemused onlookers), and to shudder at St Francis Borgia driving out demons from the bedside of a dying impenitent!

A section entitled 'Fantasies and Inventions' belongs to a period in Goya's life after he had suffered from a serious illness (in 1793), which left him stone deaf (shades of that other genius, Beethoven). His paintings from this period are oil on tinsplate. One can detect the thickly brushed surface beneath the painted scenes. Goya's darker side is concentrated here and themes include: the 'Death of a Picador' (bullfights are a recurring subject); 'Fire at Night', with dark, billowing smoke and only one sliver of light to illuminate the huddled victims; 'Prison Interior'.

IN THE mid-1790s Goya formed a liaison with the much younger Duchess of Alba (we won't speculate how close it was). This produced some playful sketches, such as the duchess teasing her old retainer, 'La Beata', who was notoriously pious.

There are some obligatory equestrian portraits, such as the wife of the Infante Don Luis; the background is a view of the royal hunting lands.

Another portrait in this genre is of Manuel Godoy (so the accompanying guide informs us). He was the favourite of Queen Maria Luisa, and was later held responsible for the occupation of Spain by Napoleon's armies in 1807-08. Napoleon

had come to 'liberate' Spain from tyranny, but his first act, in connivance with Godoy, was to overthrow the old king, Charles IV, replacing him with his son, Ferdinand VII.

Ferdinand was to become the hated reactionary ruler imposed by the victorious allies in 1815. But in 1808 the patriotic Spanish people realised that they had been betrayed by their own rulers. This led to the uprising of April and May, which was bloodily repressed. Godoy fell from power and was forced to flee into exile.

Goya later immortalised these events in

'Goya was a "man of feeling, he did not passively suffer but used his talent to protest, the violence of his indignation finding expression in the violence of his art". Where is there such art today to chronicle the barbarism of the present?'

his depiction of the mass executions of 2 and 3 May. Godoy's figure here is unrecognisable now because it was overpainted after his fall from power, 'since angry mobs destroyed his effigy wherever they found it'.

The Iberian peninsula now became an imperial battleground between France and Britain. Goya's response to these events is also depicted in this exhibition in a series of allegorical panels. Two of these

concern the theme of cannibalism. In one we see a grotesque disembowelling. Law and order had broken down. Civilised people committed atrocities that were more horrifying than those perpetrated by innocent 'savages'.

Goya was a 'man of feeling, he did not passively suffer but used his talent to protest, the violence of his indignation finding expression in the violence of his art'. Where is there such art today to chronicle the barbarism of the present?

ARGUABLY Goya was capable of his best even in commissioned works. In the autumn of 1808 he was sent to record the ruins of the city of Saragossa. What we see here are two small scenes, 'The Making of Powder' and 'The Making of Shot', painted on rough wood. They are frozen scenes of activity. These images remind me of the heyday of documentary photography before the advent of TV. It was his experiences in the city which led Goya to embark on his series of prints and paintings, 'The Disasters of War'.

During the period of reaction, corresponding to the repressive reign of Ferdinand VII, Goya painted four 'Capricho' panels (1815-19). They illustrate: victims of the Inquisition, who sit with bowed heads, wearing dunces' hats, with little flames for decoration, awaiting the inevitable verdict of death by burning at the stake; a flagellation scene, willing 'victims' of religious fervour, which was also a form of public entertainment; a

scene from a madhouse; and a village bullfight.

There is also an especially comic exhibit. It is a sequence of six scenes painted on wood telling the true story of the capture of the bandit 'El Maragato' by Friar Pedro de Zaldiva in 1806. This violent outlaw is shown threatening the friar with his gun; next the friar has the gun in his hands and he clubs his attacker; finally he shoots him in the posterior! It is very expressive and is notable for Goya's use of a familiar 'orange preparation which shows through in many areas', and which brightens the equally familiar dark tones.

I also liked very much some exquisite miniatures; one is a Rembrandtesque depiction of 'Susanna and the Elders'. These are late works, dating from Goya's self-imposed exile in Bordeaux, where he died in 1828 aged 82. The miniatures were made from blackened ivory, which was meticulously scraped to expose the translucent white; he then applied red, blue, green and yellow watercolour.

This exhibition of his small works adequately demonstrates the full range of his style and technique, and the power of his composition, disturbing at its best, truth through fantasy. This must be his special contribution to art.

Just as he himself acknowledged his debt to El Greco and Velázquez, so too were other artists who followed, such as Manet and Picasso, both inspired and indebted to this painter of 'terror and splendour'.

Rex Dunn

John Fordun

Tales of two cities

THIS column was conceived in Rosie O'Grady's — which might give the impression that it is a continuation of last week's 'Dublin Diary'. Not so. The pub has an entrance on Marx-Engels Street. From the main door you can see the Kremlin wall. Rosie O'Grady's is the more authentic of Moscow's two Irish bars.

Guinness costs more than it does in Dublin. In Moscow going for a glass of stout is a regular event only for foreigners, senior functionaries, and 'new rich' Russians doing well out of privatisation or the mafia (or both). It is a special treat for the middle ranks of the intelligentsia, and out of the question for almost everyone else.

* * * * *

FLASHBACK to my arrival in Russia. As the plane landed, I noticed one sign saying 'Leningrad', another 'St Petersburg'. This is the old airport: the new one has no doubt eliminated the contradiction.

In the city centre there were still large chunks of floating ice on the river Neva, many with a solitary seabird aboard, like the captain on the bridge. Yet across the river from the Winter Palace, in the lee of the Peter-Paul fortress, Petersburgers were sunbathing in their shorts or bikinis.

My one-day tour was hectic: the St Petersburg of the tsars, the Petrograd of the Bolsheviks. (The change of name to Leningrad was an act of revolutionary piety more suited to Stalinism than to Bolshevism.)

My guide, an historian of opposition to Stalin in the 1930s, almost ran from place to place, cramming us when necessary on to one of the increasingly irregular and overcrowded buses, or into the more efficient metro.

'Trotsky was imprisoned here.' 'We are now passing under the Finland station.' 'Lenin proclaimed his April theses there.' 'This is the room where the Provisional Government was arrested.' 'Here is the Smolny Institute, seat of the first Soviet administration.'

And much more. Petrograd (as it was from 1914 to 1924) was a great place to make a revolution, with wonderful palaces to take over, in which to establish the authority of the working class and its right to the best in the culture of the past. Moving the capital to Moscow, seen as tactically necessary in March 1918, changed the whole ambience within which the new workers' government operated.

It will be impossible ever to divorce St Petersburg from its revolutionary associations. The buildings ensure that.

Reactionaries can tamper with historical education, using instruments as various as the dictatorial decree and the national heritage tea-towel; but they can never really privatise the past.

* * * * *

ON THE nine-hour train journey to Moscow, the carriage was dominated by central Asian Gypsies with high cheekbones, exotic baggage and fine children. The public address system played vigorous Russian songs; then changed to 'Putting on the Ritz' and 'Let's face the music and dance'.

My friend in Moscow began with the latest story. A man is driving fast along a road when he is overtaken by a chicken — running. Amazed, he accelerates, but the fowl still outstrips him.

Suddenly it veers up a track, through a farmyard and into the

fields. The driver follows, stopping outside the farmhouse. 'What was that?' he asks the farmer. 'A new type of chicken from America,' comes the reply. 'Is it better than your old type?' asks the driver. 'Well,' says the farmer, 'we don't really know. We haven't been able to catch it yet!'

It took me a moment to see why my friend found this so funny. The Aesopian joke, which played such a role in maintaining morale in pre-glasnost days, is still around. Not long after, farmer Yeltsin told a French newspaper that Russia is committed to the pursuit of the market economy and democracy.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, a deputy was gunned down by the mafia; the murder rate overtook that of the United States; the death rate of the 'underground' population soared; and the attempt to introduce a self-service system in some food-stores had to be abandoned because too many people were eating straight from the shelf.

* * * * *

MAY DAY coincided with the Orthodox Easter, rung in this year by the Kremlin bells for the first time since 1918. The Patriarch Alexei had been to the fore in signing President Yeltsin's 'civil accord', a paper agreement amongst most of the main parties and major institutions.

It is supposed to commit them to resolving differences peacefully, and the president to making a success of economic reform and progress in improving social conditions.

The May Day parade organised by the trades unions (there was another specifically called by the Stalinist parties and the neo-fascists) looked impressive, but was short on working-class slogans. A group from a Kaluga factory marched with a banner reading 'No to unemployment', one of the few comments to reach out beyond the march to the masses not present.

I can tell you this, not through my own linguistic skills, but thanks to my WRP colleague who is fluent in A-level Russian. The previous day this enabled him to negotiate our way into the Pushkin museum at the local price of 600 rubles, a tenth of what a mere tourist like me would have had to pay.

The gallery has such a fine collection of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings that entry would have been cheap at a much higher price. But our friend's success so buoyed up his morale that I would not give much for the chances for any examiner who tries to do him down in a few weeks time.

* * * * *

BACK to Britain and the news that Peter Fryer has returned, unannounced because all his letters from afar went astray. 'Welcome home!' may I be the first to proclaim. For the time being at least, this is John Fordun's farewell.

I am aware of loose ends. I promised to tell you why Anthony Hopkins does more harm in 'Shadowlands', filling the cinemas with tear-soaked Kleenex tissues, than giving a beginner's guide to cannibalism in 'The Silence of the Lambs'. I was going to reply to readers' letters and to answer 'the Scottish Question'.

But the editor has called 'time'. Some of these matters will have to be discussed in another forum. If you have been, thanks for reading. If you did, thanks for writing. 'Valete', as John Fordun would have written. It is Latin for 'Bye-bye the noo'.

T.B.

Television

Violence and repression

Review by Nick Lee

THE second part of WITHOUT WALLS: 'Lesbians Unclothed' (3 May, Channel 4) was billed in the 'Guardian' TV page as 'another machine-gun monologue from Camille "Motor-mouth" Paglia on why she doesn't much like other lesbians'. Paglia certainly has a reputation for getting up the noses of radical feminists and this was no exception.

After a brief history and an acknowledgement of capitalism and industrialisation as having made it possible for lesbianism to develop as a conscious identity — something you *are* rather than just something you *do* — she focused on the 1970s and radical lesbianism as political statement rather than sexual choice.

Chic

Though not unsympathetic, she stressed the negative side of political lesbianism — humourless women with short hair and overalls. She moved on to the 1980s emergence of lesbian chic, or 'lipstick lesbianism', with its glitzy magazines and challenge to male stereotypes. Here again the emphasis was on a negative portrayal of the limitations of attempts at subcultural autonomy.

The message was that lesbian culture has had no impact on the general cultural scene, and attempts to create, for example, a distinctly lesbian eroticism have failed by com-

parison with the achievements of gay and straight men.

She concluded by stressing the bisexuality of most women. Women should solve their problems with men and, by responding to male sexuality, develop their own.

What about men sorting out

Paglia started off by noting how 'that dreaded word, capitalism' had created the free space for the emergence of new sexual identities. But she was more reticent on the forms of male sexual repression and violence which capitalism has fostered such that to be gay or



Camille Paglia: a reputation for getting up the nose

their problems with women! What seemed lacking in Paglia's presentation was any sense of what women and lesbians in particular are up against. The background assumption seemed to be precisely the post-modernist notion of endless possibility for the self-creation of identities, and if you fail to get it right then you've only yourself to blame.

lesbian is not, as it should be, an easy choice.

VIOLENCE and repression were the subject of TAKING LIBERTIES: 'Crossing the Line' (5 May, BBC2). Another programme on 'vigilantes' and wild men 'taking the law into their own hands'. The content consisted largely of tales of disproportionate revenge, mostly

from Tyneside and South Wales, by drunken thugs murdering or barbarically wounding the 'wrong' victims, who had been mistaken for burglars or car thieves and against whom the police had failed to act.

Not only this but juries, reflecting local communities driven to despair by crime, are showing sympathy to vigilantes when they are charged and brought to court. A nice young police officer was brought on to say how terrible this sort of thing is and that it is on the increase.

Crumbling

The sub-text was that the social fabric of provincial Britain is crumbling under a wave of lawlessness, the police cannot cope, and so angry citizens are taking on the role of avengers — only they get it wrong because, unlike Charles Bronson, they are drunk, vicious and incompetent.

I have always been fascinated by the criticism of people for 'taking the law into their own hands'. I wonder just when this phrase emerged in popular speech? Perhaps an historian might help.

Where else would the law be but in the hands of the people? How was it taken away from them and their own sense of justice and fairness stolen and then distorted by the state just as the skills of the workers were stolen and then distorted by capital?

Programme guide

Saturday 14 May 'FA Cup Final Grandstand'. Live coverage from Wembley of the match between Manchester United and Chelsea (Match starts 3pm, BBC1). **FINE CUT: 'Moving the Mountain'**. New series begins with a personalised account of the 1989 student revolt in China (8.35pm, BBC2).

Monday 16 May GLOBAL IMAGE: 'Teen Dreams'. Video diaries from three US teenagers from very different backgrounds. Traun, from east Harlem, goes in search of his crack-addicted father. Adaw-

na, from Los Angeles, who has spent most of her 18 years on the streets, having repeatedly run away from the Welfare Bureau and an abusive family. And Frankie, from Miami, now living among the vacant lots, empty factory sites and substandard housing of Philadelphia's Badlands (10.55pm, Channel 4).

Wednesday 18 May 'European Cup Final'. From Athens, live coverage of the match between AC Milan and Barcelona (7pm, BBC1). **INSIDE STORY: 'The Manageress'**. Charts Karen Brady's first tempestuous season as Birmingham City FC's managing director (9.40pm, BBC1).

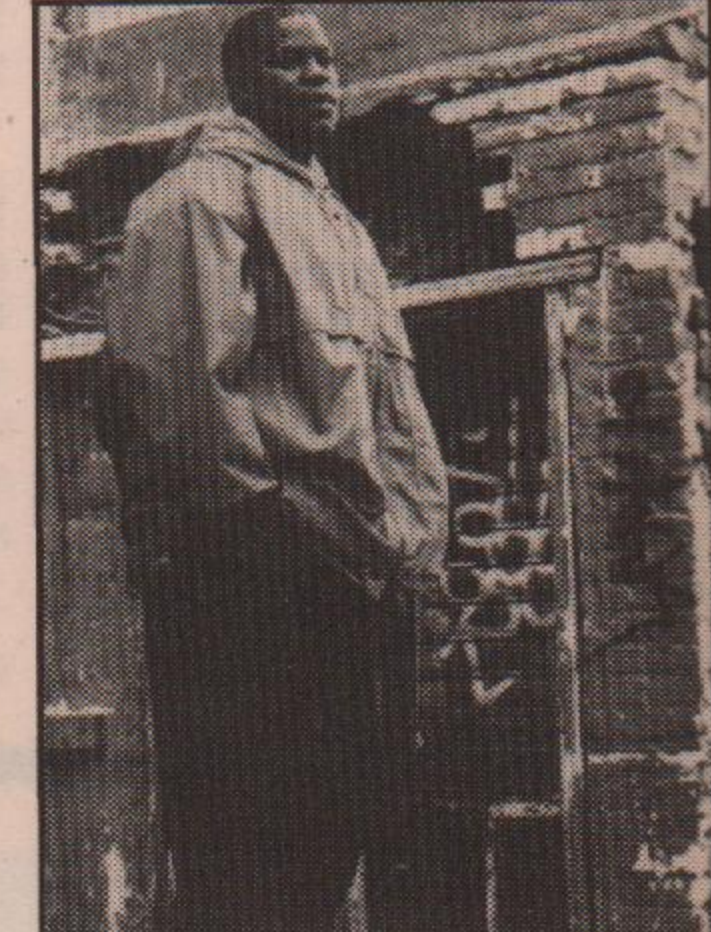
Thursday 19 May TRUE STORIES: 'Tracking Down Maggie'. A journey of near misses and hilarious encounters with Thatcher, her entourage and her son Mark, as Nick Broomfield and his camera

crew attempt to discover the more private personage of the 'Iron Lady' (9.30pm, Channel 4).

Friday 20 May PUBLIC EYE: 'Islam's Wayward Sons'. Drugs and crime are now spreading among the Muslim youth of Bradford. A report on the young who are more drawn to drugs than religion (8pm, BBC2). **ARENA: 'Sandra Bernhard — Confession of a Pretty Lady'**. Profile of the controversial performer who has become an icon of female sexual power (11.15pm, BBC2).

Selected films

MR SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON (1939). Frank Capra's superb comedy-drama in which newly-elected James Stewart finds nothing but corruption in the US Senate (Saturday, 3.25pm, BBC2). **ALL ABOUT EVE** (1950). Bette Davis as an ageing actress in possibly her most memorable role. Written and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (Sunday,



Teen dreaming of young African Americans in Harlem (Monday on Channel 4)

1.15pm, Channel 4). **THE BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ** (1960). Thoroughly dubbed and shortened though it is, a rare opportunity to see the legendary Abel Gance's epic portrayal of the great Napoleonic battle (Wednesday, 4pm, BBC2).

J.J.

Going underground in Moscow

THERE wasn't much comfort for BBC2's Saturday night viewers at the Bank Holiday weekend.

There was Andrzej Wajda's powerful but harrowing classic 'Kanal', on the 1944 Warsaw insurrection and the partisans' retreat through the city's sewer system.

This was part of BBC2's theme-programming of 'going underground'. I'm not so sure of the value of this kind of programme selection, but this time it did provide an opportunity for the screening of a remarkable film on the Moscow 'underground'.

It wasn't a film on the Moscow underground system, though there were revelations about the secret line that the KGB and the bureaucracy used for their own special needs and services.

This programme was about the re-emergence of a Dostoev-

skyan 'underground' — what the French used to call the 'bohème noire', the dark bohemia or lumpenproletariat of desperate vagabonds, criminals, prostitutes and political exotics.

Their ranks are now being swollen by displaced peasants, unemployed workers and disaffected youth drawn to a hedo-

almost impossible to return to anything that can remotely offer any level of civilised existence.

In this environment despair not only leads to drugs, violence and mental collapse, but also feeds the growth of fascist gangs, exotic Satanic cults, and the return of that tsarist

a year.

As if to underscore the political ironies of this disaster, the film showed the derelict war bunker used by Stalin, now part of the underground network of hovels and nests.

The film ends on a symbolic note: a guided tour by water workers around the sewer and underground river system first designed on the orders of the rationalist tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725) but then expanded in the 1930s as part of the Stalinist 'plan'.

These tunnels run under prestigious cultural institutions: the Bolshoi ballet and many others.

Now that the rushing waters of the underground have caused major cracks in the above-ground architecture, many of the physical features of the Moscow landscape are also drawn into the political earthquake.

Tom Owen

'An army of homeless people live on the streets by day. At night, to escape the desperate cold of the Russian climate, they take refuge in the labyrinth of bunkers, cellars, closed metro workings and sewers.'

nistic life of drug abuse and Western punk life-styles.

An army of these homeless people live on the streets by day. At night, to escape the desperate cold of the Russian climate, they take refuge in the labyrinth of bunkers, cellars, closed metro workings and sewers.

Once into this culture it is

institution, the holy madman.

The scale of the social disintegration is confirmed, not only by organisations like the French medical charity, Médecins sans Frontières, but more tellingly by one of the managers of the main Moscow morgues, who claimed that 7,500 corpses had been brought in off the streets in

Italian fascists threaten Slovenia

— and British Foreign Office befriends fascists

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

ITALIAN fascists, ready to take office as part of a new right-wing coalition, want to divert attention from the social crisis at home by threatening war on weaker neighbours.

They are picking on the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, which is still recovering from the Serb-run Yugoslav National Army's unprovoked aggression two years ago. Some fascists even want to lay claim to Croatia's Dalmatian coast—occupied by fascist Italy in World War II.

The European parliament upset Italian right-wingers by narrowly passing a resolution calling for them to respect democratic values. But Britain's Tory government is beating a path to the right-wing coalition's door, to 'do business with them'.

The National Alliance, whose leader Gianfranco Fini has described fascist dictator Benito Mussolini as the 'the greatest statesman of this century', won over 100 seats in Italy's lower house of parliament, the chamber of deputies, in the March elections.

Veto

National Alliance deputy Mirko Tremaglia says Italy should disown its 1975 treaty with Yugoslavia, which settled the frontier between the two states. Tremaglia urged the new Italian government to veto Slovenia's application for associate membership of the European Union.

The port of Trieste and the neighbouring Istrian peninsula came under Italian rule after World War I. The port of Fiume (now Rijeka), east of Istria, was awarded to the new Yugoslav kingdom, but seized by armed Italian fascists led by Gabriel D'Annunzio.

At the end of World War II, Tito's Yugoslav partisans poured into the area. After the war, it remained in contention. British and US troops occupied Trieste, while the Yugoslav and Italian governments squared off. A 1955 agreement, confirmed by the 1975 treaty, handed Trieste back to



A victim and some of the devastation after the right's bombing of Bologna station in 1980

Italy, while Yugoslavia took Istria. Tito promised to respect the rights of the Italian-speaking minority.

After the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatia and Slovenia divided Istria between them. Both countries' diplomats expressed concern after Tremaglia's speech. Italy's opposition Democratic Left said the fascist MP had shown the new government's real character: 'Irredentist and isolationist, ready to take Italy out of Europe and cast it into the midst of a Balkan conflict.'

Turning on the charm for the foreign media, National Alliance leader Fini says he is not a neo-fascist but a 'post-fascist'. Tory Central Office wasn't impressed. 'We're not interested in the semantics of whether it's a right-wing party or a fascist one,' a spokesperson commented, 'We're per-

fectly clear that there are elements in the party with which we will not do business.'

But Britain's ambassador in Rome, Sir Patrick Fairweather, was the first European Union diplomat to meet Gianfranco Fini, having lunch with him shortly after his remarks praising Mussolini. In the House of Commons, Angela Knight, Tory MP for Erewash asked whether the incoming Italian administration was not likely to share the Tory government's opposition to 'the socialist superstate'.

Promote

In reply, David Heathcoat-Amory, minister of state at the Foreign Office, said: 'We will hope to work closely with them to promote British interests, particularly in the field of

budgetary discipline, subsidiarity and the promotion of free markets and free trade, and to keep the EU outward looking and diverse and to respect the nation state and prevent the creation of a socialist superstate.'

'There is a lot of evidence that the new government and the constituent parties in the coalition share many of our attitudes.'

Labour MP David Winnick asked: 'Is it too much to ask the Conservative government here to make it perfectly clear that we do consider Mussolini to be a notorious mass murderer and we hold with contempt all those in Italy who consider him some sort of hero?' Heathcoat-Amory brushed this off facetiously by saying Mussolini wouldn't be in the new government.

In 1943, Victor Gollancz published a book called 'The Trial of Mussolini',

which imagined well-known figures in the witness-box at a trial of war criminals in 1944-45. In it was recalled past statements such as that Winston Churchill addressed to the fascists in 1927:

'Had I been an Italian I would have been wholeheartedly with you from the start . . . henceforth no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against the cancerous growth of Bolshevism.'

This was said the year after Britain's general strike, and Churchill was speaking for a ruling class still nervously aggressive. Many of them continued to admire Mussolini, or see his regime as an ally. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain kept secret direct links with the fascist dictator, and his government acquiesced in Italy's invasion of Ethiopia.

Crimes

Mussolini was shot after a trial by Italian partisans in 1945. But none of his fascist generals were brought to trial by the Allies for war crimes in Ethiopia, Greece, Yugoslavia or elsewhere. US and British imperialism were too intent on allying with the fascists in order to defend the bourgeois order. Stalin didn't want a workers' revolution in Italy, either. The Communist Party told the partisans to surrender their arms.

Some of the vicious fascist terror squads now lurking in the shadows of the post-war Gladio network set up with US and British intelligence backing. And when some young neo-fascists were wanted for questioning about atrocities like the Bologna bombing, Britain's MI6 provided them with jobs and safe-houses in London. So the Foreign Office is already used to doing business with fascists.

Italy's trade union bureaucrats are reportedly hoping the new government will leave them alone if they offer their co-operation. But workers facing attacks on jobs and services may choose resistance. In many Italian cities there were rallies celebrating Mussolini's downfall the other week. One of the biggest was in Trieste.

Chinese workers are fighting back



Plush shopping mall in Beijing. But strikes increase as foreign capital penetrates

THOUGH China's ruling bureaucrats deleted the right to strike from their country's constitution 12 years ago, there are more and more labour disputes each year.

An article by Zhang Kai in 'October Review' (31 March 1994) reveals that incomplete statistics from 15 provinces and municipalities showed 220 strikes in the first half of 1993.

Reasons were arbitrary dismissal of workers, arbitrary extension of working hours, neglect of workers' health, suspended payment of workers' wages.

On average, according to official figures, there have been 143,000 labour disputes in China each year — or an average of 400 each day — since the 'Temporary Ordinance on Handling Labour Disputes' was drawn up in 1987.

The term 'labour disputes' includes strikes, but is also applied to other forms of dispute.

China's Labour Minister Li Boyong told a Hong Kong newspaper ('Express Daily', 14 March) that throughout 1993 'strikes, go-slows, collective appeal actions, demonstrations, parades and protests numbered no fewer than 10,000'. Enterprises with joint foreign and local capital were particularly prone to disputes, he added.

Zhang Kai, in his article, gives some examples of 1993 strikes and their effects:

■ At the end of February, 1,200 workers at a shoe factory in Tianjin, run by Korean capital, downed tools in a protest against intensive labour, low pay, and hard working conditions.

■ At the end of March, more than 800 workers in Cannon factory (Japanese capital) in Zhuhai city shut the factory down for several days.

■ On 11 May 4,100 workers from the Sun Mei electrical appliance factory and the Mei Jing shoe factory went on strike.

■ In the 75 days from 9 March to 23 May, 10 factories run by foreign capital were affected by the strike wave, with an aggregate loss of 18,147 working days.

Harsh

Zhang Kai says harsh working conditions are imposed on workers, particularly in factories run by foreign or private capital. Local authorities, vying for investments, compete in offering concessions, with the following results:

1) Excessive overtime is compulsory. A recent survey by the Guangdong Provincial Federation of Trade Unions showed that in enterprises run jointly by foreign and local capital, 61 per cent of the workers work more than six days a week, with no rest day, and 20.1 per cent receive no overtime pay. Often the working day is 10-12 hours.

2) Safety is neglected. No special precautions are taken against dust, poison, and noise pollution. So anaemia, dermatitis, and pharyngitis are increasingly prevalent.

3) Wages are low and benefits are scanty. In one shoe factory in Xiamen, wages are 47 per cent of the minimum wage laid down for the city. In some of the privately

run factories in Qingdao, Xiamen, and Tianjin, wages are some 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the minimum.

4) The factories don't sign any contract with the workers, who are liable to lose their jobs without redress.

Industrial accidents, and deaths caused thereby, have become a serious problem in China, Zhang Kai continues. According to official figures, about 11,600 workers died in industrial accidents between January and August 1993, a rise of 12.9 per cent compared with the same period in the previous year.

In 1993, over 5,000 workers died in mine accidents.

In July 1993 the State Council issued a decree urging respect for industrial safety. Soon afterwards there were two horrific accidents.

On 19 November, 84 workers were burnt to death in a Shenzhen toy factory run by Hong Kong capital. All windows in the factory dormitory were sealed, and over 300 workers had to fight their way out from one narrow corridor.

It emerged afterwards that the management had before the fire bribed the fire services department to issue an endorsement of the factory's safety measures.

On 13 December, 61 workers were burnt to death in a Fuzhou textile factory run by Taiwan capital. All the staircases in the dormitory were chained with locks, in order, said the management, to prevent theft by workers.

All of Zhang Kai's assertions in this article are backed by references to the Chinese press, mainly the official 'Workers' Daily'.

TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND HOSTAGES

A THREE-FOLD hostage drama emerged in Bosnia this week; and once again, as throughout this war, Bosnians were the principal victims of military aggression, UN skulduggery, and imperialist threats.

■ Serb Chetnik forces holding eleven French aid workers they seized near Sarajevo said they would keep them in 'preventive detention' for another month. The Chetniks accused the kidnapped civilians of 'smuggling arms' to Bosnia.

■ A 'leaked' document from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), dated 4 May, warned that in view of possible unadvertised NATO air strikes and the danger of Serb reprisals, they could withdraw altogether from Serb-held areas and from three 'enclaves' — Srebrenica, Tuzla and Zepa.

■ On the same day, France's UN envoy presented a resolution to the security council, with United States backing, threatening air strikes against 'any party' who launched an offensive in the Brcko region of northern Bosnia.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

Akashi had secretly agreed to Serb tanks crossing the UN 'exclusion zone' to reinforce their positions.

Hundreds of thousands of people are being held hostage by the Serb aggressors and UN imperialists. In Tuzla, a mining area where Muslim, Serb and Croat workers are holding out against Serb forces and the poison of chauvinism, there are thousands of refugees, victims of 'ethnic cleansing', who have to depend on the UNHCR's food rations. Tuzla's own people receive nothing from the UN.

Because the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has refused to open the main, direct, northern route into Tuzla, all supplies have to be brought in along a long difficult route, much of it over mountain dirt

tracks that are impassable in bad weather. The UN can use control of supplies to enforce its political will.

Now the UNHCR says the siege of Gorazde has shown that UNPROFOR cannot be relied upon to protect its workers.

On 11 April, when Serb forces broke through Bosnian lines at Gorazde, the UN rushed two French Puma helicopters to evacuate British SAS scouts from the area, without even warning humanitarian aid workers who were left stranded under fire.

Brcko stands roughly midway between industrial Vukovar, devastated by Serb-led forces in their war on Croatia, and Tuzla. Most of Brcko's Muslim population was driven out by Serb forces at the beginning of the war.

For the occupying Serb forces its importance is that it guards a narrow corridor linking Serbia with Bosnian Serb-held western Bosnia and the Krajina region.

But looked at another way, Brcko also stands guard over

the vital northern route to Tuzla, and central Bosnia, which the UN has refused to open, and the British media refuses to mention.

Croat forces hold the Orasje pocket to the north.

Forced

If, despite being heavily out-gunned, Bosnian forces went on the offensive, and particularly if, following the Bosnian-Croat peace agreement, Croat forces co-operated, the northern route could be forced open, and the whole strategic situation reversed. Bosnian commander Rasim Delic has said capture of Brcko would be the key to ending the war.

For the moment, however, Serb commanders are talking about 'Muslims massing troops', 'a Muslim offensive', etc., to mask their own aggressive plans.

As the 'Guardian's' Yigal Hazan pointed out: 'It is a tried and tested Serb tactic.'

'They claimed their advance into the Gorazde enclave was

retaliation for a Muslim attempt to break out of the pocket.'

From Serb-held Dobo, Hazan reported: 'In Dobo, the ravages of "ethnic cleansing" — blown-up mosques, gutted shops and ransacked homes — were more visible than evidence of the enemy bombardments that are alleged to have intensified in recent months' ('Guardian', 9 May).

People in Sarajevo, who demonstrated over the UN's treachery at Gorazde will not forget, either, how French UN troops used control of the airport to help seal the siege on Bosnia's capital; nor how the commanding officer of the French battalion allowed a vice-president of Bosnia to be murdered by Chetniks while inside a French armoured personnel carrier.

France's UN resolution threatening 'any side' which takes the offensive equates the Bosnian forces trying to defend and regain their homeland with the aggressors and 'ethnic cleansers'.

It is the same phoney 'even handedness' which has denied the Bosnian people arms with which to defend themselves.

In reality, the UN has held Bosnia's hands behind its back while the Croat and Serb fascists attacked.

The UN's control and withholding of supplies to starving people is a weapon in this dirty war. As a Bosnian officer remarked bitterly to me: 'Whenever they want to open a route they always ask Pale's [i.e. the Serb nationalists'] permission; they never come to us for permission.'

The hostage crisis comes at a vital time for Serb nationalist war criminal Radovan Karadzic. In trouble with its own people over the cost of this war, the Serb government in Belgrade is trying to distance itself from Karadzic, who has been named in a banking scandal.

Hostage negotiations will be a cover for France and other imperialist powers to legitimise the Serb nationalist warlords as a 'government', and strengthen their hand.

Row

The French aid workers, from an organisation called Première Urgence, were captured by Serb forces near Sarajevo, and taken to Bosnian Serb headquarters at Pale.

A fresh row broke out meanwhile when it was revealed that UN special envoy Yasushi

Workers Aid's message to rally

WORKERS Aid for Bosnia supported a big rally in Paris last week protesting the detention of 11 French aid workers by Serb Chetnik forces in Bosnia.

Calling on every supporter of democratic and human rights to demand the aid workers' release, a leaflet distributed at the rally by French Workers Aid supporters also condemned the French government's UN security council resolution threatening to bomb Bosnians.

The 11, working for the humanitarian organisation Première Urgence, were seized on 8 April while driving a food convoy near Sarajevo. They have falsely been accused of 'carrying arms'. On 8 May Radovan Karadzic's Serb nationalist authorities at Pale announced they would hold them for another month.

In a message of support to Tuesday's rally in Paris, Workers Aid in Britain said: 'We are, like you, engaged in aid work to the people of Bosnia, and have been sending convoys to Tuzla. Some of our comrades are on the road now, and as we fear for them, so we feel for your comrades and their fate.'

'The false charge against your humanitarian aid workers that they were carrying weapons, had a particular significance for us: these same ridiculous allegations were made against us recently by politically unscrupulous individuals here. We knew such lies would be used by the enemies of the Bosnian people, to interfere with food and medical supplies, and endanger the convoys.'

'At a time when we read of bodies like UNPROFOR and UNHCR threatening to withdraw from their responsibilities to the Bosnian people, let us unite in solidarity, and pledge to redouble our efforts.'

Workers Press
SUBSCRIBE
to the socialist weekly that tells the truth

Please send me
 10 issues for £5.60
 50 issues for £27.60

INTERNATIONAL RATES: Europe and Near East, £7.70 for 10 issues, 50 for £38.50; Americas and India £12.70 for 10 issues, 50 for £63.50; Australia, Japan and E Asia 10 issues for £13.70, 50 for £68.50.

Name

Address

I enclose £..... for my subscription, and
 an extra donation of £.....

Make cheques, POs payable to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Russian economy grinding to a halt



May Day Moscow, 1994: workers' representatives from a factory in Kaluga with their banner — 'No to unemployment!'

Japanese dockers' wage offensive

FACED with a 1 per cent rate of inflation for the year ending 1 March, and a call by management for a national wage freeze. Japanese trades unions are asking for increases of 5 to 6 per cent. Last year the dockworkers' unions settled for a 3.8 per cent increase.

The 1994 spring wage offensive (Shunto) has been launched by the National Council of Dockworkers' Unions of Japan, and

the Japanese Confederation of Port and Transport Workers' Unions (Koundomei) have opened with a demand for a 12 per cent increase in basic wages.

The background to the pay offensive is the low level of Japanese dockers' and portworkers' pay and conditions — well below those of workers in service and manufacturing industries.

PRODUCTION in Russia is falling like a stone. In the first three months of 1994 production fell by 25 per cent, with every sign that the trend is accelerating according to preliminary figures for April.

The Russian Ministry of the Economy is warning the government that the drop in output of consumer goods 'threatens the economic independence of the country and brings the danger of a social explosion'.

The first deputy prime minister in day to day charge of the economy, Oleg Soskovets, said: 'Russia is living through the toughest phase of its transition.'

Statements like this have been made at each stage of Russia's plunge into turmoil. There is no hope that the bureaucracy's 'transition' to capitalism will result in Western-style bourgeois democracy, with the same bureaucracy installed as the ruling class and better conditions for the working class.

Support for continued reform has fallen to 25 per cent from 40 per cent five years ago, according to opinion polls carried out by the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The majority polled agreed with the statement that 'privatisation is legalised theft'. Between one-third and two-thirds said that privatisation

was being carried out for the benefit of the 'nomenclatura [upper echelons of the bureaucracy] and criminals'.

Production of sugar, shoes, textiles and clothing have all fallen between one-third and one-half.

Vehicle production is marginally better, having only fallen about 15 per cent in all. But the situation is worsening in some important vehicle factories, such as the massive Zil truck production plant in Moscow, which has seen lay-offs and plans to halve production.

And the AZLK (Moskvich) factory in Moscow has suffered a drop in production of between one- and two-thirds with municipal authorities having no money to renew car fleets.

The crisis is threatening hundreds of thousands of workers with being laid off with little or no pay. Investment has plummeted by 28 per cent and tax revenue is 15 per cent below budget. But if the government decides to grant credit to prop up the ailing industries it will be cut off from the International Monetary Fund finance that it depends on.

Overall corporate debt is contributing to the spiral and has trebled in the last six months. Many plants now refuse orders unless they are paid upfront.