

Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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South African paper — out now!

WE HAVE just received from South Africa a very limited number of copies — 15 in fact — of the new paper, 'Workers International News', being produced on a monthly basis by our comrades of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa).

It reports on the steps being taken to build a revolutionary workers' party in South Africa as a result of the recent election campaign in which the Workers International received a total of almost 5,500 votes in two provinces.

Also in 'Workers International News' are warnings to the working class on the nature of the African National Congress-led government: 'ANC government prepares to disarm the working class'; 'Workers take action whilst premiers make threats'; 'National reconciliation — what it really means'; 'The dawn of democracy — an illusion'; 'What is democracy'; and, 'The role of

the Independent Electoral Commission'.

Included in the first edition of 'Workers International News' is an article on China and 'Dangers to workers of popular front of Brazil' by Bill Hunter, a leading member of the International Workers League (LIT/CI).

■ As there are only a few copies of 'Workers International News' available we have decided that the first 15 letters with a £10 or more contribution to the South African fund will receive an original copy.

Photocopies of 'Workers International News' are available for £1 plus 50p post and packing (including a donation to the South Africa fund so you can't escape!). Please include an extra donation if you can.

So hurry your orders and contributions in, made payable to 'Workers International', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Workers International News

June 1994 Vol 1 No 1 Price: R1.50

A Step Forward for the building of a Revolutionary Workers Party

BOSSSES TURN TO LABOUR

BY PETER JEFFRIES

BIG business in Britain is getting ready for a Labour government.

They are getting ready to collaborate with it against the working class.

After the Euro-election results, and in the face of a Tory party that is tearing itself to pieces, Howard Davies, director-general of the bosses' union, the CBI, said that the Opposition's economic policies now deserved 'serious attention'. Davies went out of his way to praise shadow chancellor Gordon Brown and to commend Labour's abandonment of nationalisation.

Davies said that big business and the Labour Party were still at odds over things such as the EU social chapter, but added:

'It would be churlish not to recognise that the Labour Party has changed in important ways, and is offering a set of policies which, at the very least, deserve our attention. We shall give it.'

'We all know the results of the European [elections] and by-elections at the end of last week. It seems likely that we shall be facing a Labour leadership without any baggage from previous periods in power, and with a set of economic policies rather different from those which held sway in the people's party for most of the 1980s.'

Davies said that Brown had reassured the CBI that there would be no nationalisations and he stressed that the CBI backed Labour's proposals for a 'government-private industry partnership'.

This representative of capitalism was merely reflecting a situation where for months he has been in intimate discussion with leading members of the TUC, with whom he now routinely shares the same platforms.

Immediately following Davies's speech it was suggested that should Blair win the contest for the Labour leadership, one his first visits will be to Washington for discussions with President Clinton.

Like Kinnock before him, Blair wants to transform the

Labour Party into an openly capitalist party along the lines of the US Democrats. The first bill that Kinnock intended to bring before parliament had Labour won the last election was one for the public funding of political parties.

This reflects the need of the Labour leadership to sever all links with the organised working class, and immediately with the unions on which Labour still depends heavily for its cash.

Retreating

The nature of such a Labour government in office has been indicated by Clinton himself as he now retreats rapidly on his election pledge to establish a healthcare plan that would cover all American citizens, 37 million of whom are currently uninsured.

In the name of 'flexibility' Clinton is now talking about phasing in such a scheme over a number of years and devising one that would not in fact be universal.

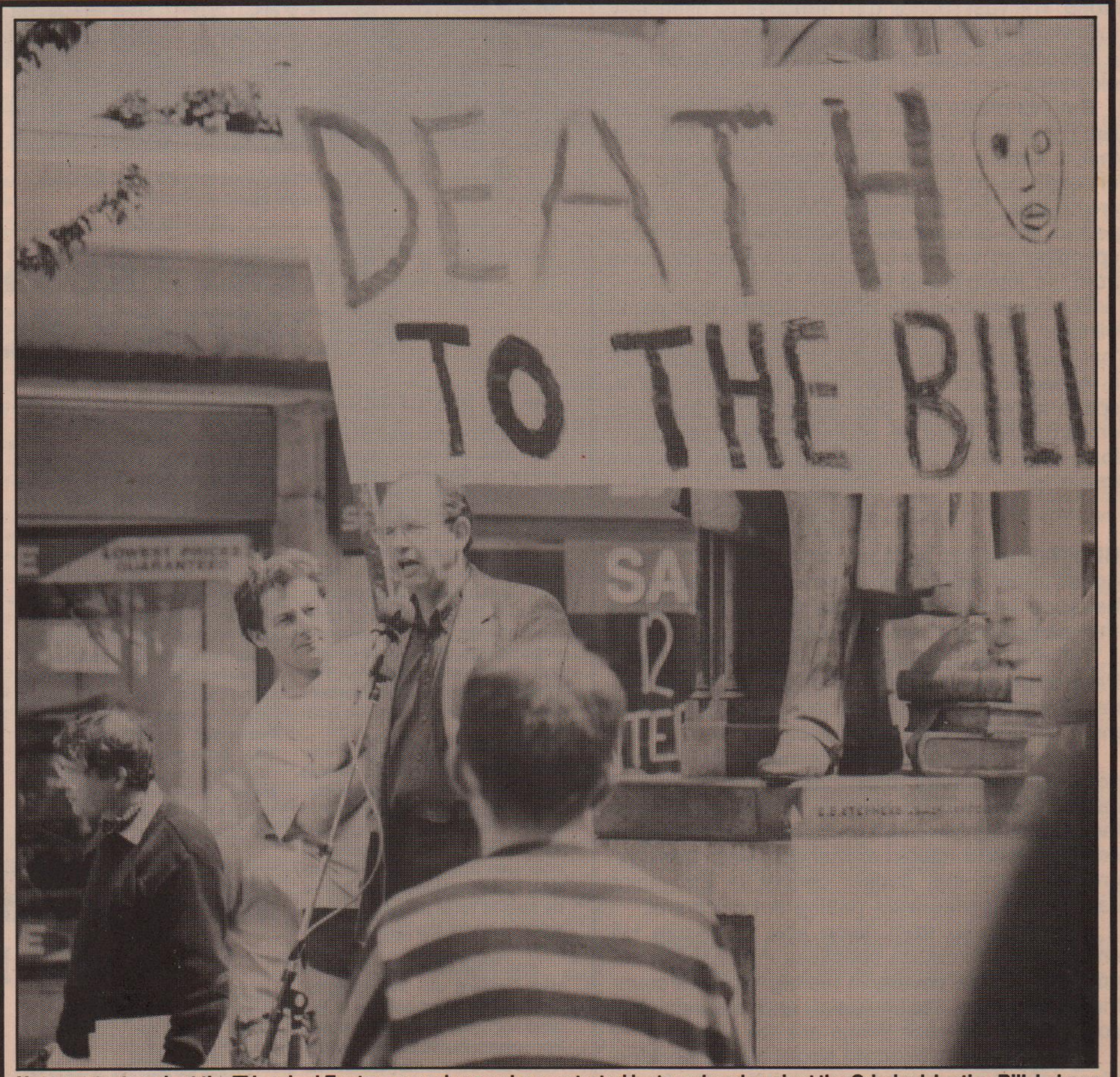
The leaders of the Labour Party past and present have always served faithfully the interests of the capitalist class. In that sense Blair and Co. are no different from their predecessors.

What is new is that capitalism can no longer afford to grant the sort of reforms that were possible in previous periods when Labour was in office.

British capitalism is now so precarious that the reforms granted to sections of the working class in the past, such as the NHS, must be taken back.

This will be the task of any future Labour government. Davies is simply making clear that big business has already reached an understanding with Blair and Brown about this.

■ Join the demonstration outside the TUC's HQ, Congress House, Tuesday 5 July against its 'Full Employment' conference. See Page 2.



Not a protest against the TV series! Exeter campaigners demonstrated last weekend against the Criminal Justice Bill. Labour councillor John Lloyd (above) spoke out against the Bill but didn't explain the Labour leaders' position: see page 3

Workers Press

A revealing 'discussion'

IN WHAT is laughingly called 'the debate' between the candidates for the leadership of the Labour Party one significant thing has emerged: the attitude of a future Labour government to full employment.

Tony Blair adamantly refuses to give any commitment on this issue. Prescott proposes that a suitable programme of government spending could reduce the present level of unemployment to 2.5 per cent, that is to around 700,000.

It is a sign of the times that Prescott is now regarded by some political pundits as being 'on the left' of the party for proposing such a 'radical' policy. For over much of the post-war period both the Tories and Labour would have accepted such a target without much discussion.

* * * * *

IT WAS in 1944 that the three major parties in the House of Commons signed the famous White Paper that committed any future government to a policy that would ensure a 'high and stable level of employment'.

Governments, thanks to the economist Keynes, now understood that unemployment could be solved by means of greater public spending. Given the will, any government could spend its way out of a threatening slump. Or so the story went.

Unemployment did in fact remain at record-low levels, certainly when compared with the 1930s. But this had little to do with government policies. Unemployment in this country was low because of international conditions.

Until the 1970s at any rate, the US economy remained strong enough to sustain capitalist expansion in Europe and much of the rest of the world. The vast spending on armaments, especially following the outbreak of the Korean war, also gave a temporary boost to demand and therefore employment.

But this phase in the history of post-war capitalism came to an end in the mid-1970s. It was then that a Labour government, faced with mounting unemployment, increased government spending to create jobs. The International Monetary Fund stepped in and ordered the government to cut back spending on welfare benefits, in return for loans from the international banks.

The government duly obliged and the then prime minister, James Callaghan, announced that the 'party was over' and that it was no longer possible, if indeed it ever had been, for a government to spend its way out of depression. From that time onwards the trend of unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, has been steadily upwards.

* * * * *

BLAIR refuses to set a target by which a Labour government would bring down unemployment because he knows that the days of so-called 'full employment' are gone forever.

Yet while Blair refuses to give any commitment, Prescott proposes to deal with mounting unemployment by resort to fiscal expansion — more government spending. This is sheer utopia.

Such a measure would immediately unleash powerful inflationary forces, leading to a flight of capital and a run on sterling. Indeed one of the factors behind the recent meltdown of share prices on the world's stock exchanges was bankers' growing fears that budget deficits in the major capitalist countries were getting out of control.

Capitalism, far from being able to ensure full employment, threatens countless millions with unemployment and poverty in the big capitalist countries, let alone the colonial and semi-colonial countries where such things are the norm.

Only socialism, brought about by the working class taking power and expropriating the bankers and the monopolists, can put an end to unemployment. Needless to say, both Prescott and Blair are light years away from such a policy.

Letters

Some questions on critical support

IN HIS letter on critical support ('Some critical remarks on "support" and the permanent revolution', 18 June) Simon Pirani makes the unequivocal statement that 'we should throw into the dustbin of history the slogan of critical support'.

I feel that this is a sectarian and highly damaging view. I also consider that a policy of critical support for certain people and movements as a tactic — rather than as a strategy — may

well be necessary in the future struggle to rebuild the Fourth International.

I would like to ask Pirani two questions, one in relation to Libya and one in relation to Vietnam.

The Workers International has little in common with the regime and strategy of Colonel Gaddafi, yet in the 1960s he led a movement that overthrew the feudal King Idris. He also threw out a massive US Air Force base

and adopted an anti-imperialist strategy.

Further, he began to use oil revenue to modernise the nation and greatly improve the standard of living of the mass of the people. The question arises as to whether Trotskyists at that time should have given Gaddafi 'critical support' as a tactic.

In 1945, Vietnamese Stalinists murdered in cold blood hundreds of Trotskyists. Yet later these same Stalinists organised the

VietCong who took on and defeated American imperialism. Should Trotskyists, as a tactical measure, have given the Viet-Cong 'critical support' in their military struggle?

A number of analogous questions could be asked.

If the answer to the above questions is yes, I suggest that Pirani should re-think his position on 'critical support'.

John Robinson
London SE3



The TUC dissipated the movement that formed after October 1992 behind the miners' struggle against pit closures

Oppose TUC collaboration

AN ANGRY response has been sparked from trades councils and the workers' movement by the TUC's 'Full Employment' conference on 5 July, at which minister for (un)employment David Hunt and CBI director-general Howard Davies are billed to speak.

Two opposition events have been planned on the day. And all trade union and working-class organisations should ensure they turn out to show that there is substantial and vocal opposition to the policy of collaboration with the Tory government and the employers.

At 8.30am, there is to be a 'Big Stick' lobby outside the TUC's headquarters, Congress House, in Great Russell Street, London. This is a response to TUC general secretary John Monks's complaint at a recent national trades council meeting that: 'I don't have a big stick to beat the employers with, times have changed. If I had a big stick, I would use it, but I don't.'

The lobby has been called by Camden, Merseyside, Wirral, Merton, South Sefton, Preston, Newcastle, Durham and Dar-

lington trades councils. It also has the support of the National Union of Mineworkers and Women Against Pit Closures.

The second event is an alternative conference just ten minutes walk away at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. This 'Full Employment: making our policy a reality' conference is due to start at 10am and will go on until 1pm.

Alternative

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) president Arthur Scargill and Anita Halpin from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) will be among the speakers.

This alternative to the TUC's shoulder-rubbing with the Tories and employers already has the backing of the TUC South-East region, the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, the London region of the Manufacturing Science Finance union, the bakers' union, the NUJ, the NUM, and the London and South-East Region No.1 of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

WORKERS PRESS £3,000 MONTHLY FUND

In so far: £1,748.93

BY THE time you read this, two comrades will have gone from Britain to Slovenia and Brazil on behalf of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International.

As reported last week, the International Workers League (LIT/CI) is holding its world congress in Brazil and the Slovenian energy workers' union is organising a conference of central European workers. The Workers International/Workers Press have been invited to both events.

Our comrades of the Workers International (South Africa) also need money urgently. They are producing a monthly paper, 'Workers International News', which we have copies of now (see front page), and also they have produced T-shirts to be sold to raise money for their work — some are to be sent to Britain.

And WRP members strive to take forward our international perspectives and politics in the workers' movement in Britain. For example, we have leading members at the centre of the struggle for a firm working-class response to the fascists in east London. All this needs to be more and more reflected in Workers Press and, unfortunately, it's often lack of the interconnected factors —

money, time, resources — that stops this happening as effectively as it should.

As I mentioned last month, a build-up of debt since January has meant that we need more than the £3,000 monthly target. This deficit needs to come in NOW. While we need to question our own generosity, we also need to build a perspective of going beyond the old 'normal' circles for fund-raising. This question faces every organisation in the working-class movement — trades unions, campaigns, the Labour Party, etc. — not just the WRP. The bourgeois response is 'tighten your belt', usually made by those with money to those most in need — the poor, the unemployed, etc. That is

the way the trades unions and Labour Party respond. They lose members, they lose money, so they cut back on the work they do, but keep the big salaries at the top. In doing this, they lose their meaning as working-class organisations — and they lose more members.

But the WRP and Workers Press can't respond in this way. We have to break out if we are to take up our responsibilities in the working-class movement. So that means not just money but working to build the movement. We need money now, but we must also take this forward.

Mike Cooke
Send money to 'Workers Press', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Please send us more of your pictures!

THE EDITOR has been on to me again. He wants to know why readers who send in stories do not send in any photographs.

Stories on disputes at work, demonstrations or pickets against the closure or rundown of hospitals, schools or social services read so much better if there are pictures with them.

If you are good at taking photographs but not at writing stories, the

staff at Workers Press can write up your notes on the event. All you have to do is send us the pictures you have taken.

In this way you can extend the paper's coverage of events and improve the way the paper looks.

So please help to make the Editor's life easier. Send more pictures!

From the Circulation Department

Drunks in the boardroom?

A MORI survey for the Health Education Authority, on drinking during working hours, provides an insight into the way managers think of workers.

Among personnel directors, 20 per cent of those who thought that 'no employee should drink during working hours' had themselves had a drink in working hours in the survey week!

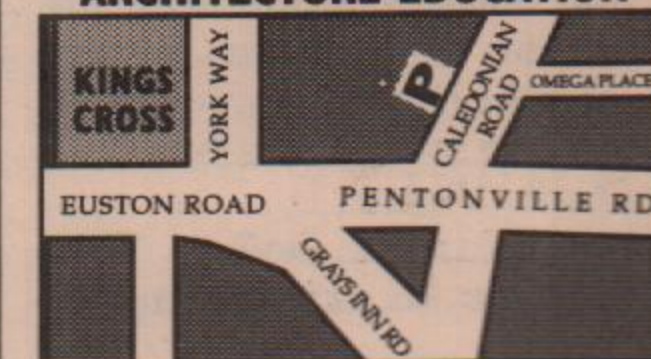
Of the workers surveyed, 63 per cent thought that you shouldn't drink during working hours. But of senior directors surveyed, 80 per cent thought there should be an exception for them.



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ASLEF conference snubs executive

TRAIN drivers rejected a 2.5 per cent pay offer at ASLEF's annual conference, throwing out a settlement negotiated and agreed to by the executive.

But whether this reflects the mood of the membership or is just conference rhetoric remains to be seen.

Last week's conference took this decision knowing the pay offer had been 'accepted' and would be in pay packets by the end of this month.

ASLEF negotiators, led by new general secretary Lew Adams, are now in the unexpected position of having to request further talks with British Rail.

This must be a unique experience. Conferences certainly overturn recommendations of their leaders and censure those leaders, passing votes of no confidence and the like. But they do not usually take the next step and throw out an agreed pay deal.

Whether British Rail is prepared to re-open pay negotiations remains to be seen. At first sight it would appear that they might sit tight and hope that the imminent 2.5 per cent would be enough.

There is no doubt, however, that ASLEF's conference delegates were influenced by the resolve and determination of

BY AN INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

another group of skilled railway workers, the signalmen of the other rail union, RMT.

The success of the RMT's first one day national strike last week has added a new dimension, and the ASLEF conference decision appears to be backed by warnings of possible industrial action.

Sell

This is certainly not what the government wants as it proceeds to break up the national rail network and sell off its component parts.

For railway workers, however, this may be the last chance to improve wages collectively before they have to negotiate with a multitude of different employers such as Railtrack.

Signals' strikes expose both government and Railtrack

THE RAIL signalling staff's dispute has already exposed the arrogance of the new Railtrack management, not to mention the connivance of the government.

Managers were on holiday as strike preparations were being made. And, the government initially denied any involvement and then had to admit that it had blocked the 5.7 per cent offer.

The offer to signal staff was a 5.7 per cent increase on the basic rate of pay from 1 April 1994, and then the 1994 pay offer to be based on the new rate — another 2.5 per cent.

This offer was not without strings. It is difficult to understand, even by government standards, how signals staff are considered not to have increased their productivity. Technology in the field has resulted in a highly-skilled workforce that has been drastically reduced in size as signal boxes have become more and more

sophisticated and now cover huge areas of the rail network. Railtrack will undoubtedly be looking for more concessions.

The signals staff's claim is totally justified, and it is surprising that their frustration at three years of fruitless negotiation has not surfaced earlier.

A significant feature of this dispute has been the success of the ballot for industrial action.

Ballot

In the past the RMT has balloted and then found difficulties with a vote in favour of action based on a low turn-out. This time the vote was 4 to 1 in favour of industrial action from an 80 per cent turn-out.

Perhaps those non-unionists who enabled a handful of trains to run will think again about the need for collective action and unity of purpose.

The fact remains that the signals women and men's basic

of £146 rising to a top rate of £225.65 remains an unpleasant legacy of the rail industry, based on low pay and the need to work overtime. Average earnings are around £327 a week with 11 hours extra. Such an outmoded pay system is neither justifiable nor acceptable.

Earnings based on large amounts of overtime and the three-shift system are not compatible with safety — remember the Clapham Junction disaster.

The conciliation service ACAS has failed to break the deadlock, and there was a second day of industrial action last Wednesday. The responsibility for this rests with the government and its henchmen from Railtrack.

Commuting workers are aware of this. But it is significant that the contenders for the Labour Party leadership are unable to draw the same conclusions and openly support the signals workers.

Victory for Barnsley cleaners

BY SETH DRYSDALE

A GROUP of contract cleaners in Barnsley, South Yorkshire have won a strike against a national company.

The cleaners, employed by Gala Bingo, were all reinstated with eight weeks back pay after a two-month fight.

They had originally been sacked by Initial Cleaning Services, a subsidiary of the giant BET (British Electric Traction), over a working hours disagreement. BET last year showed profits of £9.8 million.

The sacked cleaners — seven women and one man — formed a support group that fought nationally for their reinstatement and better conditions.

The strikers won the support of Barnsley trades council and raised money by visiting local clubs and pubs dressed in bin-bags and armed with mops.

Speaking for the group, one of the cleaners, Carol Bottell, said they would have continued to fight 'even if it had taken two years'.

She said links had been forged with contract cleaners in London and Lyons bakery, whose cleaners are also employed by Initial Services.

The group has joined the Transport and General Workers Union and wants to see a cleaners' section formed in the union.

Exeter rallies against a criminal bill

BY GEOFF BARR

THE traditional labour movement joined students, Greens, animal-rights campaigners, anti-fascists and the anti-roads movement last Saturday in a strong rally in the centre of Exeter against the Criminal Justice Bill. Exeter College students' union is to be congratulated on its work in putting together the campaign against the Bill.

Protesters

Anti-roads protester John Drury said campaigns had ended an uncritical acceptance of new roads and made people aware of the way these roads are destroying communities and environments.

A direct-action campaign was vital: getting into construction sites, protesters locking themselves onto machinery,

occupying houses up for demolition to make way for roads.

The new Bill would change most of the protesters' actions from civil wrongs into criminal offences. Even waving placards on private land would be a crime. But this would not deter campaigners.

Squatting would also be made a criminal offence under the Bill. This was not just the Tory government rabble-rousing its supporters; they planned to marginalise alternative lifestyles and aimed to reimpose the 'discipline' of private property and work.

'We will deal with the Bill as we dealt with the poll tax — make it completely unworkable!' John Drury declared.

Councillor John Lloyd, Exeter's Labour candidate at the last election, showed how the

Bill will remove the obligation on councils to provide campsites for travelling people, and fiercely denounced the proposed end to the right to silence.

Agenda

But Lloyd did not explain why the Labour Party, especially leadership favourite Tony Blair, is so keen on 'law and order' and has accepted the Tory agenda.

The low point was a defence of the Bill by Tory Adrian Rogers, a bigot who makes Mary Whitehouse appear a freethinker.

Rogers aroused real anger and was soon shouted down.

The rally showed the campaign's real feelings and energy, as well as the range of movements prepared to fight.

MI6 try to clean up

PEOPLE working for MI6 have to sign the Official Secrets Act, which, as a result of the 1989 amendments to the Act, means that they cannot tell anyone that they work there.

This applies to everyone — even cleaners! They have always been told that because of that they could not join a trade union.

Since MI6 moved to its new and expensive building at the south end of Vauxhall Bridge, it has found that it needs to save some money, so it now wants to cut the wages of its 50 cleaners. We are told that the cleaners do not even have contracts of employment, even though some of them have worked for the Secret Intelligence Service for over 20 years.

What seems so odd, given all the fuss about the Official Secrets Act, is that the management proposes to privatise the cleaning of the MI6 building,

and wants to force the cleaners either to accept redundancy or stay on a lower rate of pay.

Because in law MI6 does not exist, the cleaners say they have been told that they will not receive the full redundancy pay rates but they cannot tell anyone! They cannot tell a trade union, although they have spoken to an MP.

It tells us a lot about a system of government and management that can spend over £70 million on a new office block, £8 million on new furniture to go in it, but wants to cut the wages of the lowest-paid staff who clean it.

Wrong impact

THE MOTOR manufacturers' latest sales pitch is that your new car is safer because the doors have 'side impact bars' installed.

It is now reported that an estimated 100 people are killed each week across Europe in side

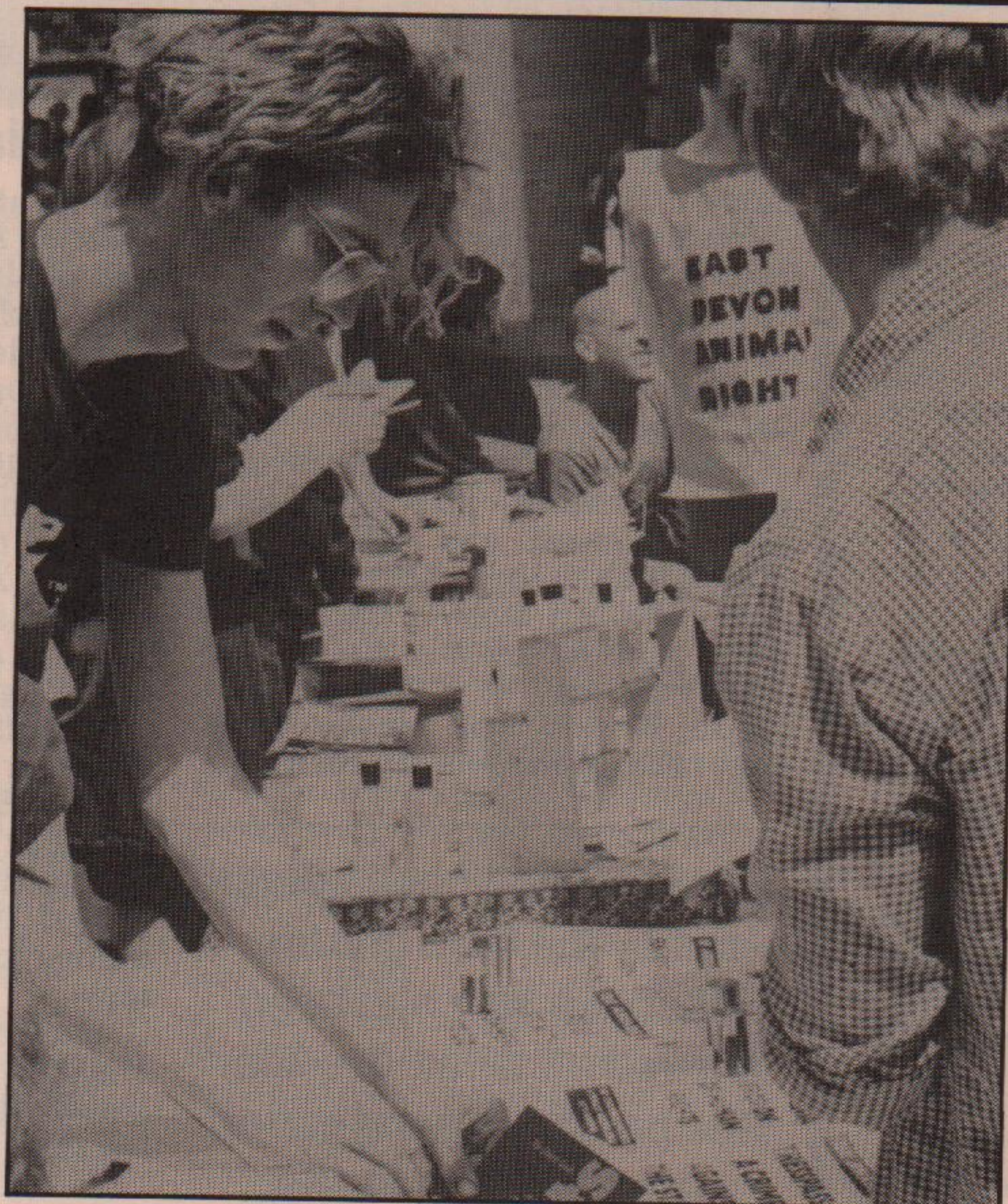
impact crashes. Many of the deaths are caused by side impact bars being forced into the driver or passenger.

The increased use of air-bags and seat belts is only effective in front- or rear-end crashes. They are no help when the car is hit in the side.

Professor Adrian Hobbs, head of the Transport Research Laboratory, is calling for manufacturers to fit doors that help push passengers away from the impact rather than stiffer doors. A stiffer door simply means that, when your car is hit from the side, you are hit by a stiffer, stronger object.

Car manufacturers are not sure how to proceed. They are in the middle of a sales drive in which some of them have been hyping the side impact bars, but a Nottingham woman is currently suing Nissan for more than £50,000 for 'negligent design' following a side impact crash. The crash, which happened at low speed, left her with a fractured pelvis and broken legs.

Since they are driven by the need to increase sales and profit



Stalls representing the range of campaigns against the Bill

rather than safety, the big car manufacturers are now divided on the issue of side impact bars. However, it seems likely that they will receive far less exposure in car adverts in the future.

Teachers burn out

OVERWORK as a result of four years of the national curriculum is causing teachers considerable stress leading to varying responses, says a report by Warwick university researchers, commissioned by the right-wing teachers' union, the ATL.

And the report says that the situation is not getting better.

A normal working week for a primary teacher is now 54 hours, with one in ten working more than 60.

Another response is illustrated by one teacher who said: 'There is a lot more of going home, throwing the bags down and having two stiff gin and tonics.'

The report says of its interviews with teachers: 'Some talked of tiredness, irritability and depression, of sleeping badly, increased drinking, occasional crying in the staff room, and a sense of guilt that they were neglecting their families.'

Most infants teachers believe the changes have lowered reading standards among five- to seven-year-olds, although many thought there was better performance in science, technology, history and geography.

Hackney denies free speech

TWO GHANAIAN workers have been threatened with the sack by Labour-led Hackney council — for speaking to each other in their own language.

A council spokesperson described their behaviour as 'rude'. However public service union UNISON No. 1 branch representative Tony Whelan sees it rather differently. He points out that the two workers were happy to explain what they were saying if asked.

'It was just easier for them to chat or gossip in their own language,' Whelan says. The council does not allege that the pair ever spoke to the public in anything other than English.

According to Whelan, no workmates found the use of Ghanaian offensive. It was only the senior manager, who proceeded to use the powerful disciplinary procedures available to her to carpet the pair.

UNISON sees the case as an example of the increasingly dictatorial management methods learnt by the Labourites from the Tories.

They are lodging a complaint with the Commission for Racial Equality on behalf of the forcibly anonymous Africans.

In Hackney it is a disciplinary offence for council employees to talk to the press, or indeed even the elected councillors of the borough. The union is also appealing against the disciplinary action already taken against the pair.

As Whelan put it: 'How the council can claim to have equal opportunities policies against racism and sexism and then issue a decree like this beggars belief.'

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Inside left

Missing pieces

X-PAGE article (and that was part two, mind!) in David North's Detroit-based 'International Workers Bulletin' (23 May) lying-against Workers Aid for Bosnia, the Workers Revolutionary Party, of 'aiding imperialism in the Balkans' by smuggling arms to Bosnia.

No evidence was offered to support the lie; nor an explanation of why Workers Aid should be supposedly required to break the imperialists' own United Nations arms embargo!

Comrade with a strong stomach wading through the entire six pages, remarks: 'The Chetniks, a nationalist irregulars, now associated with some of the most atrocities of the Bosnian war, are not mentioned once.' That provides a strange picture of Yugoslav history, and the war! We're out some pieces, and bend the puzzle to fit?

Last Christmas, a Workers Aid rally for Bosnia was held up by the authorities claiming the road was mined. *With Croat and international trades unionists' support*, the rally leader Dot Gibson of the Workers International demanded the road be cleared. 'International Workers Bulletin' claims 'this could only be interpreted as a call for a full-scale military assault against the Serbs'.

Could 'only be interpreted' in any way by a paper which also claims the WRP 'may well be part of a bourgeois coalition government of national salvation' in Britain!

Attacking WRP political secretary Cliff Slaughter for having 'revolutionary morality' in North's paper doesn't mention that this was against former WRP member Gerry Healy, charged with 'morally and sexually abusing' comrades. North knew some were victims, but their experience was discarded. Now 'International Workers Bulletin' takes sides with the Serb torturers and rapists.

Star turn

DIRERS of Vanessa Redgrave no doubt be delighted to hear she is to perform in the state of New York in a play about Bertolt Brecht. It can but enhance the cultural climate there. Having opposed the reactionary blacklisting of Redgrave in the United States and Israel, and criticised the Redgrave support-counter-productive campaign by the actors' union, Equity, for a general boycott of Israel, I'm not either displeased.

One might even put to rest the speculation about the WRP (of which Redgrave was for a time a prominent member) being 'anti-Semites' and 'pro-Arab' for Colonel Gaddafi. I don't think it will stop David North, who spread this smear well after we had expelled Healy and Redgrave, and pandered to the Arab bourgeoisie. I wonder, however, whether Redgrave has discussed her move with her minions in the acting profession who followed her lead, like the people in the Centre for Education who took a stick for refusing to assist a company in Israel?

Redgrave hasn't just changed her mind, and her change of heart's new. A few years ago she organised a concert at the Albert Hall, ingeniously entitled 'Reconciliation in Jerusalem', and asked the Palestine Liberation Organisation to put up the money. Palestinians are still being squeezed out of their land. At a meeting last year discussing PLO leader Yasser Arafat's 'peace' deal with Israel, a spokesperson for Redgrave's bizarrely named 'Marxist Party' begged everyone present for lack of realism.

Charlie Pottins

Bosnian women in concentration camp victims of Serb chase away from the nightmarish

OVER 120,000 people killed in Bosnia, thousands beaten, tortured and raped, nearly 2 million refugees. But what do these figures really mean, if we don't see or hear the human beings who are being counted?

The women who were in Omarska concentration camp near Prijedor, north-west Bosnia, can still picture Hajra Hadzic. Her teeth had been beaten out by the Serb guards. Her black hair had been shaved off to remove lice. She had been gang-raped more times than she could count. Her clothes were in tatters. But when Hajra, 22, stood in the food line, she held her head high in defiance.

Fellow prisoners would whisper encouragement, slip her extra pieces of bread, and look into her eyes, trying to say what they could not. But when most of the women were sent to another camp and later released, on 3 August 1992, Hajra Hadzic was among those kept behind, and has not been seen

'Her teeth had been beaten out by the Serb guards. Her black hair had been shaved off to remove lice. She had been gang-raped more times than she could count.'

or heard from since. She is presumed dead.

'I dream of her at nights,' says Hasiba Harambasic, one of the survivors. 'I always wanted to reach out and touch her when she came along the food line,' she told Neely Tucker of the 'Detroit Free Press' in an interview in Slovenia ('Survivors of a Death Camp Starting Over', 31 May).

The women from Omarska are now among the almost 2 million scattered Bosnian refugees; but a couple of dozen remain in contact, speaking to each other at least once a week. Some of them do it daily, relying on each other for support, comradeship, sanity.

'We are trying to help each other live again,' says Jadranka Cigelj, a 46-year-old lawyer from Prijedor. Hasiba Harambasic was a dentist, Nusreta Sivac a civil court judge, and 'Rejana' — an assumed name (she has relatives still in occupied Bosnia) — a café owner. The 36 women held at Omarska, aged be-

CHARLIE POTTINS reports on the horrific experiences of a group of Bosnian women and on their fight to help each other against the ghosts of the past

tween 19 and 63, included teachers, doctors, academics, a social worker, students and village housewives, and one slightly retarded woman. All but two were Muslim.

Bosnia breaks away

IT WAS after the Serb-led Yugoslav National Army destroyed the Croatian industrial city of Vukovar in 1991, and its forces from Bosnia bombarded the Croatian medieval port of Dubrovnik, that Bosnia decided to break away from the federal republic.

The move was endorsed by 70 per cent of the people in a referendum in April 1992; but the Serb nationalists were prepared. They had the army on their side, and Chetnik gangs armed by Belgrade.

With their tanks and guns they took over Prijedor, and began sacking non-Serbs from their jobs and rounding up non-Serb professionals, putting them in concentration camps like Omarska, a former mining complex 15 miles outside town.

Hasiba Harambasic was charged with being a friend of a gynaecologist accused of sterilising Serb women. Jadranka Cigelj

was a member of the Croat HDZ party, which had fought the Serbs in the 1991 Croatian war. Sivac had helped with legal procedures for the referendum. Others were charged with 'Muslim sympathies'.

At first, say the women, they thought the Serb reaction was going to be just temporary. Some even went along voluntarily for questioning, thinking they had nothing to fear. 'I went to the police station wearing a silk shirt, a skirt, my shoes and carrying a handbag,' says Harambasic. 'I thought I'd be there maybe an hour or two.' Instead, she was ordered onto a bus and taken to Omarska.

On arriving there, she was shocked to see thousands of men lying face down on the ground, hands behind their heads, with armed soldiers stepping around them. She was taken upstairs to an interrogation room, where a woman officer fired questions at her about 'anti-Serb' activities. When she said she didn't know what the woman was talking about, the woman pulled her across the desk by her hair and began slapping her.

Cigelj was interrogated for nearly five hours when she arrived at the camp. Nearly all her ribs were

broken, and her left hand. This was early in June 1992.

The camp became a killing ground where men were beaten or tortured to death. Although no records were kept, aid agencies, the UN and others put the figure at well over 2,000, perhaps even double or triple that. The 36 women were brought in to cook, clean, and be raped by guards; two were taken away and killed early on.

The surviving women did not know each other, and at first they used to fight each other over every scrap of bread. 'We yelled at, sniped at and fought one another,' says Cigelj. 'We were being beaten during the day and raped at night; we were terrified.'

The women unite

BY JULY the women began to unite. They had to — they were piled 18 to a room, all sleeping on the floor at night. All day they worked side by side. There was little food, and much of it was rotten. There was only industrial waste-water to drink. 'It turned your urine bloody,' recalls Sivac.

Some mornings when they came down to cook, there were 20 or 30



Bosnian prisoners in Ternopolje camp: the surviving Omarska inmates were transferred here

men as y re



Anguished Bosnian refugees fleeing a Serb assault. Today most of the women at Omarska live as refugees

bodies on the grass outside. Some men were shot in front of them, others were beaten to death with steel rods. One man was buried alive. Some had their eyes gouged out, some were castrated. The women shared stolen bread and cigarettes, never talking of what they had seen, and began to look out for one another.

When Rejana's two sons came along the food queue, Cigelj slipped them an extra slice of bread. When they saw one woman's husband being led out to be tortured, they distracted her so she wouldn't see. They were powerless to stop the nightmare of the rapes, but they would comfort the victim when she was brought back into the room.

'We all had our owners, whom we belonged to,' says Cigelj. 'They would come to the door and call for you and you went. My owner, Zeljko Mejahic, couldn't stand Muslims, so he took me and another Croat woman.'

During the days, they cooked, served their fellow prisoners — who under the camp's rules had only two minutes to eat — then cleaned up after them. In the early evening, they cleaned up the blood and the brains in the upstairs interrogation rooms. Other times, they washed their underwear in cold water. Every now and then, they washed their bodies and their hair. They grew very close.

'Jadranka . . . slept next to me at night,' says Hasiba Harambasic. 'One night they were beating men to death in the next room, we held our hands over each other's mouth to keep from screaming. We couldn't make any noise because they'd come to get us. For hours we lay there, faces so close.'

Omarska is closed

AT THE end of the month, US journalist Roy Gutman and a British television crew learned of the camp. Their reports aroused world-wide feelings of outrage. The Serb authorities had to do something. Talks were due in London, and war criminals like Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic — who claimed Omarska was just a harmless 'transit centre' — were grooming themselves for international recognition.

'They didn't have time to kill us all and get rid of the bodies, and they knew the Red Cross and journalists were coming,' says Cigelj. 'So they ordered us to clean up the camp and sent us to another camp.'

When the camp was being closed, 29 women were put on a bus and taken to a camp at Ternopolje, where conditions were better. The rape and torture ended. After a few days they were released.

Harambasic's husband came to the camp gates to get her. He almost didn't recognise her; she'd lost 30 pounds in two months. They hugged and cried, but words were hard to find. Finally, near the car, he managed: 'Well, old woman, you're still alive.' She burst into tears. The worst was over.

With the war raging, it was not easy to return to their homes, now within the so-called 'Srpska Republic' carved out of Bosnian territory. Harambasic's house became a target for snipers every night; she got threatening phone calls every day. Rejana's café had been taken over by somebody else, and so had her flat. A soldier had moved into Cigelj's home. Sivic found her court clerk had moved into her flat.

'She insisted I come over to visit. I went over there. She had taken my garage and my Ford Escort. When I knocked on the door, I noticed she'd put her nameplate on it.'

'She opened the door. She was wearing my slippers and one of my skirts. She poured me coffee in my cups. She talked about how Serbs were being killed on the front lines. I just said "Really?" I didn't care any more. All I wanted was out; it was a crazy town.'

Escaping to Zagreb

GETTING out was difficult. Chetnik forces controlling the border demanded bribes for visas — up to \$350 per person — from people who had already been dispossessed. Cigelj was the first of the Omarska women to get out, early in October 1992. Having a Croatian passport, she was able to settle in Zagreb, the Croatian capital.

She then began working to get her parents and her camp comrades free. On 20 October Sivic also escaped, riding in a UN convoy, with all she had in a suitcase:

\$200, a few shirts, two skirts, one pair of shoes, some underwear, and her law diploma. She went to a UN refugee camp. For a few months, she went into her shell. She was miserable, but couldn't stand to see anyone. Her husband, in Switzerland when the war broke out, wasn't even with her. She eventually moved in with friends in Zagreb, and her husband rejoined her.

It took several more months for Rejana to get out. Local Chetniks, knowing how successful her café had been, were convinced she had money, and demanded huge bribes to let her leave. An aid agency smuggled her out in the back of a lorry, hidden among empty fuel cans. The drivers took her to a refugee camp near Zagreb.

She had only just got off the

'The camp became a killing ground where men were beaten or tortured to death.'

lorry, and was 'walking around in a state of shock, reeking of diesel', when she saw Sivic. 'She didn't really know where she was, couldn't really talk,' says Sivic, who took her to Zagreb.

Meanwhile Cigelj had joined the Croatian Information Office and had started a campaign to bring other survivors out of Serb-controlled Bosnia. She knew Sivic was out and so they met up, and Sivic joined her campaign.

'We'd wait for hours outside the UN and Red Cross offices to meet the convoys coming out of Bosnia,' says Sivic. 'If the women got out, though, they knew we were looking for them and they knew to call us.'

Some women couldn't or wouldn't face the others. Five of them left Bosnia, never looking up Cigelj and the others. Others couldn't adjust well to freedom. Harambasic and her husband bribed Serbs at the border, then

went straight to Austria to live with her brother. She did not look up the other women.

'I was falling apart,' Harambasic now says. 'No one was going to kill me now, but I was hysterical and I couldn't control it. They gave me drugs to calm me down. I could hardly sleep.'

For six months, she talked to no other survivor of Omarska. But then she suddenly began to miss them all. It took her a month to find Cigelj.

'I took the train to Zagreb. She met me at the station. We burst out crying and hugged each other a long, long time there on the platform. She took me to her flat, and there were six or seven other women there. It was the greatest reunion! And then all the past came spilling out, all the things we had seen and had happened to us, things that we never talked of in the camp.'

This was in April 1993. She soon moved to a flat in Slovenia, where she now lives. She talks to Cigelj almost every day. She is nearly ten years older, she is Muslim and Cigelj is Croatian. None of this matters.

Behind a wall

TODAY, most of the Omarska women live as refugees. Only a few, like Cigelj, who was born in Croatia, have the papers to work in the country they have migrated to. The rest are in refugee camps or live with relatives, waiting for the war to end so they can go back home.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimates that less than 10,000 non-Serbs remain in Prijedor, out of a pre-war population of nearly 60,000.

Nearly half the female survivors of Omarska now live in Germany. Four are in the United States, three in Croatia, two are in Sweden and two in Austria, and others have gone to Slovenia and Australia.

Like the thousands of rape victims during the war, they still live

behind a high wall of secrecy, shame and silence.

When the Croatian government offered to fund an eight-bedroom house for rape victims — a haven for support and counselling — nobody would move in.

'We gave them all the assurances in the world we wouldn't publish the address of the house, but they were having none of it,' says Tanja Vucelic, director of the Croatian Office for Refugees. 'They felt like it was a public announcement of what happened to them.'

Sivac, who opposed the idea, explains: 'We want to get on with our lives, not be locked away and isolated like some sort of exhibit. We may talk to each other about what happened to us, but we do it on our terms.'

Sivac says she has never discussed the camp with her husband. Harambasic now confides in Cigelj far more than her husband. Jadranka Cigelj, the campaigner, sometimes gives lectures about the war's victims, but she does not discuss the details of the camp. With an office phone, and a boss who looks the other way when she makes long-distance calls, she keeps track of each woman, looks for those still missing, and pushes for the UN War Crimes Commission to investigate harder.

Trying to explain what holds the women together, she says: 'Look, we are not all the same, we disagree about politics, about a lot of things. We yell at each other, hate each other and love each other all at the same time. This isn't a fairytale where we all hug. But, at the bottom, I can see something deep in the eyes of these women that I do not see anywhere else, and I know they understand me.'

'I could not live without Jadranka,' says Harambasic. 'I often wondered if it was worth surviving the camp, if maybe it wouldn't have been better to die there. And I can tell you that, if it hadn't been for these women, the answer would have been yes, it would have been better to die.'

The Affair

THIS year marks the hundredth anniversary of the start of the Dreyfus Affair, which split France into two hostile camps and dragged on for 12 years.

Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer born in Alsace and employed at the French War Office, was accused of writing an unsigned letter to the German embassy in Paris, with a memorandum (*'le bordereau'*) listing French military secrets to be sent to the German military attaché.

Though he protested his innocence, Dreyfus was court-martialled and convicted. While a mob chanted 'Death to the Jews!' he was publicly degraded — his badges and buttons were stripped off, his sword broken — and sent to solitary confinement for life on Devil's Island in French Guiana.

When a London newspaper ran a false story that Dreyfus had escaped, he was shackled each night so tightly that the chains bit into his flesh.

In 1896 the newly appointed head of the French secret service found convincing evidence that a Major Esterhazy was in German pay, and that the *'bordereau'* was in his handwriting.

Esterhazy was acquitted by court martial. The pro-Dreyfus newspaper *L'Aurore* then published Emile Zola's famous open letter to the President of the Republic, *'J'accuse'*, accusing the War Office of suppressing evidence and concealing a grave miscarriage of justice, and challenging those he accused to prosecute him.

The powerful Anti-Semitic League, led by Jules Guérin was furious. There was a series of anti-Jewish riots in about 70 provincial towns and cities. In Algiers the Jewish quarter was sacked. There was fighting in the Chamber of Deputies, and the president was assaulted with a walking-stick.

In one cartoon Zola was shown as 'King of the Pigs', painting a map of France with a brush dipped into a chamber-pot labelled 'international shit'.

The novelist Francois Mauriac later recalled how at his Catholic school chamber-pots were called '*zolas*', and how a fellow pupil played at the degradation of Dreyfus, 'removing the wing of a fly, then a leg, then another wing'. For Catholic teachers Dreyfus's guilt was an absolute dogma, on a level with the infallibility of the Pope.

Zola was prosecuted for libel and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He fled to Britain.

In 1898 the arrest and suicide of the colonel who admitted to having forged a letter allegedly from the Italian military attaché, referring to Dreyfus — this had been the main piece of evidence against him — led the government to press for a review of the Dreyfus sentence.

In 1899 there was a fresh trial by court martial, but the verdict was still 'Guilty', though with extenuating circumstances and with the sentence reduced to 10 years. A fortnight later the government pardoned Dreyfus, and in 1906 the Supreme Court of Appeal finally reversed the 1894 sentence. Dreyfus was reinstated in the army with the rank of major.

Two years later he resigned, but during the 1914-18 war he rejoined, was promoted to lieutenant-colonel, and was awarded the *Légion d'honneur*.

Though the case did not assume major dimensions for four years after 1894 — during which time Dreyfus's brother was almost the only person seeking to establish his innocence — even then the reaction of French socialists was hesitant and confused.

In February 1898 the parliamentary socialist group issued a 'Manifesto on the Dreyfus Affair', which made no reference to the anti-Jewish riots but denounced the Affair as 'a struggle between two rival factions of the bourgeoisie' which must not distract socialists from the real fight against the capitalist system.

Tactically, this attitude to-

PERSONAL COLUMN

wards a monstrous injustice done to a French soldier was not very sensible. In his 1895 introduction to Marx's 'The Class Struggles in France', Engels had observed that in France 'the government is by no means sure of the army' and that no lasting victory was possible for the socialists unless they first won over the great mass of the people — including, by implication, the army.

It was left to the socialist leader Jean Jaurès to argue against Marx's son-in-law Jules Guesde that:

'On the day that a crime is committed against a man, on the day that it is committed by a bourgeois hand, but while the proletariat, by intervening, might have stopped the crime, it is no longer the bourgeoisie alone that is responsible, but the proletariat itself.

'For by not stopping the hand of the murderer ready to strike, it becomes the murderer's accomplice. And then it is not a blot on the setting capitalist sun, but a blot on the rising socialist sun.'

That spectre again

'EIN Gespenst geht um in Europa — das Gespenst des Kommunismus.' So runs the first sentence of the 1848 'Communist Manifesto' in the original German.

And that word 'Gespenst', German-speaking friends assure me, can, like the word 'spectre' in the familiar English translation, mean an apparition of the future as well as a ghost from the past.

This finally disposes of Neal Ascherson's fatuous suggestion in the 'Independent on Sunday' (15 May) that Marx and Engels were, in that opening sentence, using words without their 'usual accuracy' (cf. this column, 21 May).

Hardly less fatuous, I find, was the way this sentence was Englished in the first published translation of the 'Manifesto', which appeared in the Chartist journal 'The Red Republican', edited by George Julian Harney, on 9 November 1850:

'A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe. We are haunted by a ghost, the ghost of Communism.'

But neither Marx nor Engels — nor, indeed, Harney — was responsible for that doubly frightful 'hobgoblin'. Engels started work on an English translation in Barmen in April 1848, but only got half-way.

The translation in 'The Red Republican' — in Harney's introduction to which the authors of the 'Manifesto' were named for the first time — was the work of Helen Macfarlane, a supporter of Chartism about whom tantalisingly little is known.

A.R. Schoyen writes, in 'The Chartist Challenge' (1958), that from her signed articles on Thomas Carlyle in Harney's 'Democratic Review' 'it is possible to gather that she was a remarkable person — an ardent feminist, thoroughly emancipated and advanced in her expression; well-read in philosophy and an admirer of Hegel; and evidently a travelled woman as well, having witnessed the Vienna revolution in 1848'.

Schoyen thinks that Macfarlane, an acquaintance of Marx and Engels, was the author of the articles signed 'Howard Morton' in 'The Red Republican', which displayed 'obvious power and penetration', 'intimate knowledge of the inner politics of Chartism', and 'intimate knowledge of the Communist Manifesto'.

Peter Fryer

While acknowledging Dennis Potter's commitment and courage, TOM OWEN disagrees with the extravagant claims made for the late TV playwright, whom he calls

A 20th-century English puritan

WHEN the English television playwright Dennis Potter died on 7 June his death was made into a media event.

It was not just the obituaries in the broadsheets, which were to be expected. But in what may have seemed to some as a macabre drama Potter had not only announced his impending death, but declared his intention of completing two television dramas, 'Cold Lazarus' and 'Karaoke', which he had arranged to be shown, one on BBC and the other on Channel 4.

He then gave a 90-minute valedictory interview with the much less talented and, in my opinion, insufferable head of arts broadcasting for London Weekend Television, Melvyn Bragg.

Potter told Bragg that 'I do have a sense of vocation. . . I'm no longer ashamed of saying I have it.'

He also said that he would have liked to shoot Rupert Murdoch before dying because of the tycoon's corrosive power over the public service media.

A remarkable commitment

WHATEVER we might have to say about Potter's work, one thing is clear: his prodigious output, produced under the most difficult physical conditions, attests to a remarkable commitment as an artist to his chosen medium.

While suffering from the crippling skin disorder psoriatic arthropathy, he wrote 29 single plays, five original television series, and five serial adaptations.

Captivated by television, which he first saw as a sixth-form grammar school pupil, he later believed it would become the medium for a sophisticated and humane 'common culture'.

After his death some pretty extravagant claims were made about his achievement. Allison Pearson, in the 'Independent on Sunday', claimed to have found in him the Borges of television (the Argentinian Jorge Borges is regarded as one of the greatest Hispanic novelists of this century).

Others, I'm told, have compared him to Shakespeare. Whatever other claims have been made for him, he is generally stated to be the 'greatest television dramatist'.

Liberal nostalgia

WITHOUT wishing to be churlish, I have many reservations about Potter's work, and feel that much of the critical hyperbole may be a product of liberal nostalgia for a golden age of media innovation and radicalism, and for a lost reformist illusion that a capitalist state

institution could have provided for a democratised and vital public culture.

The Harvard Business School managerial 'culture' that dominates the public services today is not an aberrant form of capitalism; on the contrary, it is the only form we have short of fascist barbarism. And it is a grave and dangerous error not to recognise this, whatever domain of endeavour you are engaged in.

To give Potter his due, when he was at his vitriolic best, tapping into that English dissenting puritan tradition in his McTaggart lecture on the state of the media, he was, with undoubted courage, moving towards such a perspective.

Do these political differences have any bearing on the quality and the perception of human life and its drama in the artist's creative work? I think the answer is yes.

If the claims of Potter's champions are to be examined seriously, then he should be subjected to the same scrutiny as his acclaimed peers, especially those who have a claim to political radicalism or satiric subversion of an inhuman political order.

We should perhaps draw a veil over the Shakespearean claims. I cannot remember a line of Potter's that has any proverbial resonance or could describe 'the quality of mercy'.

But we do have to ask whether in his chosen medium, the television play, Potter tells us anything about the great human project of freedom, of individual and collective realisation, that we find in the work of, e.g., the 17th-century revolutionary poet John Milton.

Do we find the same passionate denunciation of folly and oppression that we find in the devastating satire of Jonathan Swift, whose 'Modest Proposal' was that starving Irish children be reared as animal stock to be butchered for the tables of the English aristocracy?

These questions are not posed to reinforce some academic literary canon. On the contrary, they are posed because the new communication media have an unparalleled possibility for the cause of enlightenment.

Class, 'class', and English satire

IN HIS own way Potter understood this, and the main obsession of his work was class — or, more precisely, the English system of class.

But Potter's notion of class is not that of a historic socio-economic formation but of a system of extra-economic forms of identity like status, cultural difference and linguistic difference, which in Britain have taken on what one writer has



Dennis Potter: combined fantasy, dream world, and realism

called 'an often ludicrous emphasis'.

It is this historic survival of 'class' within the capitalist class system that has provided a rich vein for English satire and humour. But it also demands a deeply penetrating ironic intelligence to break through into its ideological moulds.

Potter's inventiveness as a television dramatist lay in his ability to exploit a range of English popular genres and styles and present them in a fluid combination of fantasy, dream world, and realism.

Once he had found this formula, he repeated it as a vehicle for his own obsessions. He dealt with childhood, demonic possession, personal corruption, sexual exploitation, illness, and his own sense of social displacement.

The loss of innocence

POTTER's plays drew large audiences and offended both the respectable right and the populist hacks of the 'Sun'. I am sure that part of his appeal was that his great rage was directed against the loss of innocence.

The succour and compensation for this which people sought in a degraded secular world was found in the meagre gruel of popular commercial culture, pre-war sheet music, pop songs, westerns, and pulp

detective stories. Indeed he refers to the songs of 'Pennies from Heaven' as having something of the 'Psalms of David' about them.

The moral and political myopia of his cast of song-sheet sellers, private detectives, popular performers of one kind or another is constantly mirrored in a parody of popular art forms. Indeed, Potter became a master of pastiche.

But however appealing pastiche may be, it is not in itself a vehicle for ironic insight.

For that sense of political irony you need a sense of distance — or what Trotsky called 'proportion' when he criticised the poet Mayakovsky and other leftist artists who, in a way not dissimilar to Potter, tried to collapse art into life, to fuse it with forms of mundane living.

Perhaps this is the source of the feminists' legitimate criticism against 'Blackeyes'.

In his exposure of sexual exploitation, Potter seems to be fascinated by the stripper's act. He seems first to titillate, then to accuse and invite a sense of guilt.

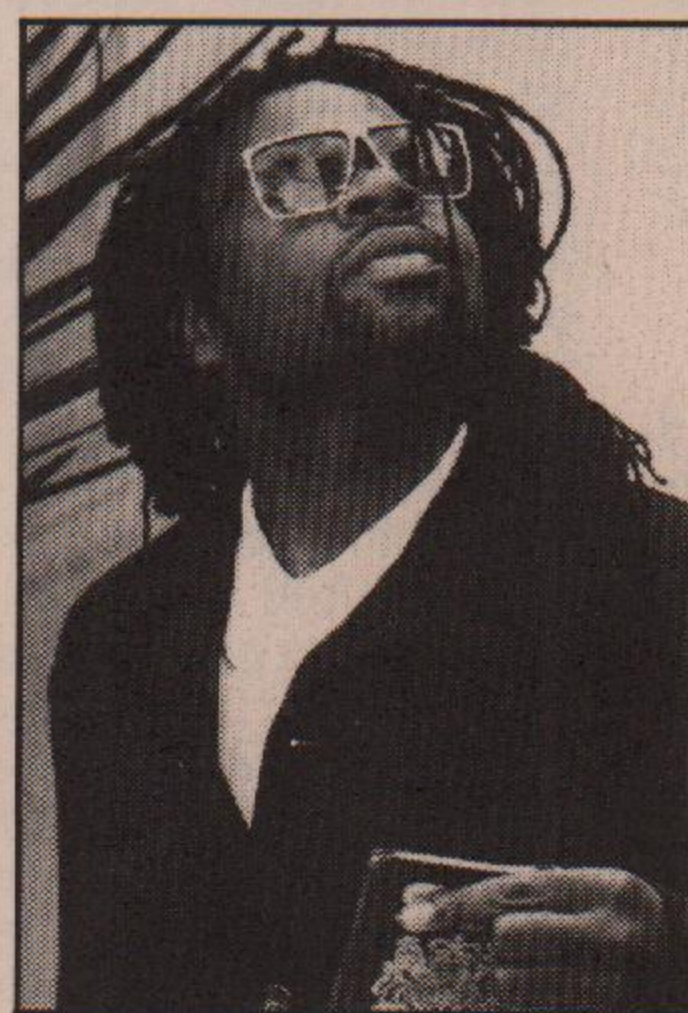
This is the mechanism of English puritanism. This puritanism was the source of both Potter's strength and his weakness. It was the source of his outrage and inventiveness, and of his dark and tortured obsessions.

This, I believe, was what prevented him from making a 'modest proposal' for our times.

Television programme guide

Monday 27 June 'Stonewall 25'. Marks the 25th anniversary of the famous Stonewall rebellion which gave rise to the modern lesbian and gay movement. In 1969 a routine raid on a gay bar in Greenwich Village provoked three nights of rioting by its patrons who had simply had enough of police harassment (11.30pm, Channel 4).

Tuesday 28 June 'One Small Step — Man on the Moon'. First of four programmes looking back at the space race, 25 years after US astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon's surface (9.30pm, BBC2). 'Face to Face: Jeanette Winterson'. Jeremy Isaacs interviews the prize-winning author of 'Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit' (11.15pm, BBC2).



Jazze B of Soul II Soul looks at why many black people are leaving for the Caribbean, Channel 4 on Weds

Wednesday 29 June 'Frontline'. Jazze B, of pop group Soul II Soul, looks at why many black people — even those successful and middle class — are thinking about returning to the Caribbean (9pm, Channel 4).

Thursday 30 June 'The Indiscreet Charm of Pedro Almodovar'. Examines the work of the controversial Spanish director, including his films 'Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown' and 'What Have I Done to Deserve This?' (11.15pm, BBC2).

Friday 1 July 'Rudolph Cartier — A Television Pioneer'. A tribute to Cartier, who died in June, creator of the 1950s seminal TV sci-fi drama 'The Quatermass Experiment' (10.10pm, BBC2).

Selected films

THE PROFESSIONALS (1966). Richard Brooks's action-packed western about wealthy rancher who hires a group of mercenaries to rescue his kidnapped wife (Sunday, 8pm, Channel 4). **CLASH BY NIGHT (1952).** Atmospheric Fritz Lang drama about former drifter Barbara Stanwyck's unsuccessful attempt to settle down to married life with easy-going fisherman Paul Douglas. With Robert Ryan (Monday, 9.25am, BBC2). **THE MATCHMAKER (1958).** Screen version of the Thornton Wilder stage play. With Shirley Booth, Anthony Perkins and Shirley MacLaine (Thursday, 10am, BBC2).

JJ

Bosnian state makes sell-off plans

THE GOVERNMENT of Bosnia-Herzegovina has proposed that all property registered as collectively owned before the war should be taken into direct state control in order to facilitate its privatisation. The proposed new law is to be discussed by the state's executive bodies.

The government claims that its intention is to create an economic system based on private ownership, and that the process of regaining state control is necessary to establish a clear legal owner of the property in order to sell it.

Immediately before the war 80 per cent of Bosnia's total assets was under collective ownership. The rest was private.

Trades unionists have objected to the proposed law change. While the 'experts' say that it is not known who has ownership of collective property, the unions have replied that the property belongs to the workers. But, like the Social-Democratic Party, they have not opposed the privatisation outright. Instead they have demanded only that it is not carried out at the expense of the workers.

An economist at Sarajevo University comments: 'It is hypocrisy to suggest that a starving population will be buying

shares. These will be bought by speculators, thus legalising illegally-gained money. The present collectively owned property has not been accumulated by the Communist Party, the state or Tito, but by the workers, managers and businessmen themselves.'

The measures undoubtedly originated in discussions with various agencies from western Europe and the US, and especially with the many representatives now in Sarajevo who are fighting over contracts for rebuilding the destroyed towns. As in the rest of eastern Europe, foreign capitalists want to establish property rights — the rights to buy and own — before they sink any money into the country.

Divisions

Last week Workers Press printed an article on the way food aid coming into the country is falling into the hands of black-marketeers. This helps to increase divisions in Bosnia and thus undermine the struggle to defend a multi-ethnic society and regain control of the whole country.

It is only the war-profiteers, former bureaucrats and Western bankers who

will be able to buy the privatised factories.

To stop the black-marketeering requires the working people, the soldiers, the unemployed and students — all the poor people who sold everything they had to stay alive last winter — to take control of the food aid coming into Bosnia and to oversee its equal distribution. But clearly this task is not simply a logistical one.

If any group of citizens, in Tuzla say, tries to get hold of and organise the aid, they will come into immediate collision with the black-marketeers. These profiteers have strong connections with the United Nations and the aid organisations and now, clearly, also with the government, which is preparing to throw them the biggest prize yet — the collective property.

Any attempt by the working people to take hold of food supplies will need a powerful and determined organisation. In the same way, the trades unions and the working people will have to build a powerful campaign against the privatisation plans, which are backed by the Bosnian and Croatian governments and by all of their financial backers, from Saudi Arabia to the US.

City Lights

Unemployment mystery

UNEMPLOYMENT dropped by another 20,000 in May.

This figure was celebrated by the government as further proof that the economy continues to recover.

If the official figures are to be believed, the number claiming unemployment benefit has dropped some 310,000 since December 1992.

Yet almost everywhere you go there is the same reaction: most people are firmly convinced that the number of people not working is increasing month by month.

Indeed something curious is going on, even if we leave aside the government's deliberate doctoring of the official figures that has taken over a million people off the register.

For if the number claiming unemployment benefit has fallen so too have the number in work, whether they be employed or self-employed.

This latter figure is down 58,000 since the end of 1992.

So where have these 368,000 people who are no longer employed but no longer draw benefit gone to?

They are among the 'economically inactive' — defined by government statisticians as those not looking for or not available for work.

ACCORDING to a study made by Jonathon Wadsworth of the London School of Economics between 1975 and 1990 the proportion of men aged 16-65 who were inactive rose from 2.9 per cent to 10.6 per cent.

By 1993 12.3 per cent of men of working age were inactive.

Of this group the most significant is the 110,000 who left the labour market between the winter of 1992 and the winter of 1993.

Part of this increase is owing to men opting for early retirement.

Taking 1986 and 1993, unemployment rose by 23 per cent in the 55-64 age group.

Inactivity for the same age group rose 20 per cent.

For the age group 22-54 unemployment rose 9 per cent and inactivity 4 per cent.

Another reason for the increase in the category deemed inactive arises from the rising numbers claiming invalidity benefit.

The biggest increase comes not from those in work but from those already on the unemployment register.

Wadsworth finds that there is a strong correlation between skills levels and long-term sickness.

In 1990, some 30 per cent of graduates of both sexes who were inactive were long-term sick.

The same figure for those with low educational achievement was 65 per cent.

This suggests that the sharpest drop in employment is for unskilled, middle-aged people and particularly for men.

Another reason for the dramatic rise in inactivity is the sudden rise in student numbers.

More and more students are being crammed into further and higher education colleges to hide the real level of unemployment.

The government may be able to massage the figures by defining as unemployed only those out of work claiming unemployment benefit or income support.

The reality is quite different. The continuing decline of British capitalism has caused a collapse in demand for unskilled labour.

Consequently large numbers have been pushed not simply on to the dole, but out of the labour market altogether.

Piggy bank

INSURANCE companies are

creaming millions of pounds' profit at their customers' expense.

These are the findings of the government's Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

The news comes after recent revelations of widespread mis-selling of personal pension plans by insurance companies, which misled many into leaving state schemes.

Up to 400,000 people may have been wrongly advised.

Six out of ten policies are surrendered before their maturity date, often with derisory or even negative returns.

It seems that insurance companies, using aggressive foot-in-the-door techniques, may be deliberately selling inappropriate policies to people in the hope that they will then cash them in to the great benefit of companies' profits.

This the insurance companies deny but the OFT report suggests that companies make more money if policies are lapsed early than if they run their full term.

The report discloses that if those surrendering policies are included the return to savers from many companies is no more than marginally positive.

In other words you would be just as well keeping your money in a piggy bank.

Hi-tech, low wage

THE DECLARED aim of Tony Blair, likely to be the next Labour Party leader, is a so-called 'hi-tech, high wage' economy.

One of the giants of the computing industry, the US Apple Corporation, has other plans — certainly as far as Ukraine is concerned.

For they want a high-tech, low-wage economy.

If Apple's bosses are to be believed, they want to make the city of Kiev in Ukraine the computing capital of Europe.

The former Soviet republic's ability to churn out programmers for the military machine has left half a million computer experts idle and desperate for work.

Apple wants to adapt its standard US computer data bases to individual needs.

This is a highly labour-intensive job that would normally take up to two years in the US but, according to Apple, could be done in two weeks in Ukraine because of the great number of out-of-work but highly skilled technicians.

Ukraine has produced 500,000 computer science graduates since 1960 and Apple plans to work on this base and by 1995 to have 2,000 programmers ready trained for its needs.

It was Ukrainian know-how that for years fed the Soviet military machine.

The first 'super computer' in continental Europe was built in Kiev in 1950 and many of the Soviet army's missile guidance systems were developed in the same city.

Apple's aim is to undercut Bangalore in India as the cheapest software centre in the world.

Computer programmers there are earning \$1,000 a month compared with the Ukraine average of \$35.

Jack Minsky, Apple's director of international operations, believes that if Apple keeps churning out programmers at a sufficient rate this will keep wages in Kiev below the \$250 mark.

Apple has received assurances from the Ukraine government that it will crack down on software pirates.

In any case, Apple's outlay for what could prove to be a highly profitable venture is chicken feed, having cost Apple as little as \$150,000 for the entire scheme.

Threadneedle

Musician who defied the guns

'MY CELLO is my weapon,' says Bosnian cellist Vedran Smailovic, who is to play a concert for Workers Aid for Bosnia, in London's Royal Academy of Music on 14 July — appropriately enough, for a concert about freedom, Bastille Day.

Pianist Aida Gavrilova, from Tuzla, will be among other leading artists performing, and Bosnian exiles are hoping the concert can be relayed to cheer relatives back home.

Vedran comes from a musical family. His father Avdo was a composer, and he started out playing in a quartet with his three sisters. But while his musical reputation was made young, he drew world attention as a symbol of defiance last year, when he went out onto the streets of his native Sarajevo, in full evening dress, and played his cello under fire.

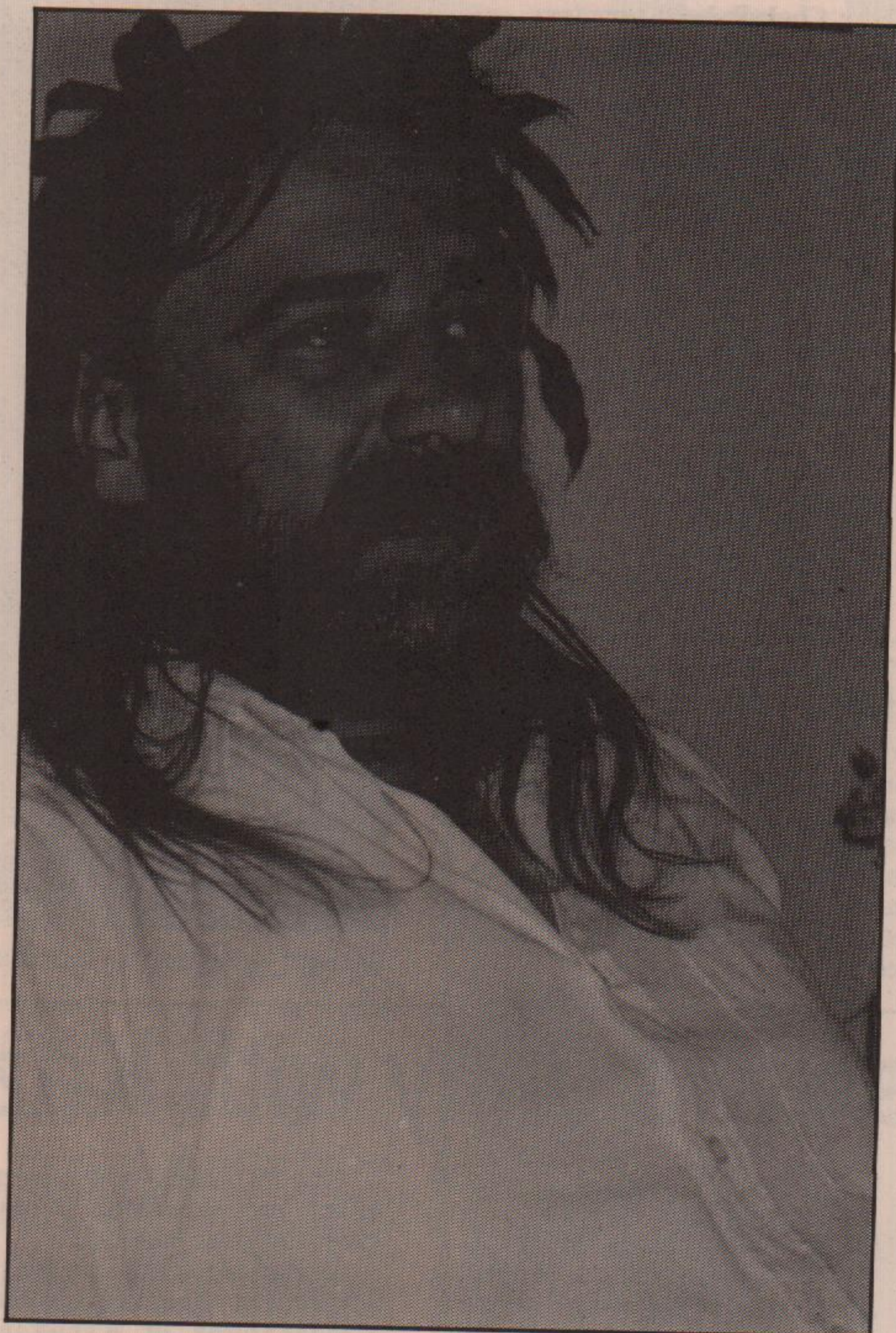
Enemy

To commemorate the 22 people killed by a Serb mortar attack on a bread queue on 27 May 1992, he went out daily for 22 days, playing his music in full view of the enemy.

In more peaceful days he had made his name by taking his music out of the concert halls, and into the schools and villages. In besieged Sarajevo he went deliberately to places like the national library, destroyed by Serb high-incendiary shells, or the graveyard where civilians had been killed.

As he explained to amazed war reporters:

'Since the beginning of the aggression and the first attacks on Sarajevo, which took away a lot of innocent lives and destroyed innumerable cultural and historic monuments, I have played my violincello on the sites where my fellow citizens were killed, or in the ruins of the architectural symbols of my native city.'



Vedran Smailovic: took his music out of the concert halls

'I can only speak through my music and soon even that voice may be silenced. Last week my best and oldest friend was killed. He too was an artist. Tonight or tomorrow it may be my turn.'

Typifying Sarajevo's multi-cultural tradition, Vedran boasts that he was born within a hundred yards of a synagogue, a mosque, a Serb Orthodox church and a Catholic cathedral. Asked his religion, he says 'musician'. His libertarian and pacifist views brought trouble with a local

warlord who had the cellist dragged off to the hills to dig trenches, before the Bosnian authorities could intervene.

Although prepared to risk his life to focus attention on what's being done to Bosnia, Vedran Smailovic has learnt to be cautious when speaking to the media. 'Often a journalist will ask questions and in each question there is already an answer, and you have to be prepared for this.'

He found a Voice of America reporter placing their own interpretation on what he'd

said to suit a Serb programme. In Spain, after five minutes talking about music and life in Sarajevo the cellist was asked: 'Can you tell us what you think about NATO airstrikes? What chance is there they could hit Serb positions.'

'I told them "Gentlemen, I play chess. I know you have come here to make a provocation, but stay and listen". All the time I must be prepared for provocations.'

Such annoyances apart, Vedran found a warm reception from ordinary people and music-lovers in Madrid and Barcelona, as he did in Edinburgh and Detroit. But when Scottish musicologist Nigel Osborne first tried to bring him to Britain last year, the Foreign Office strenuously objected.

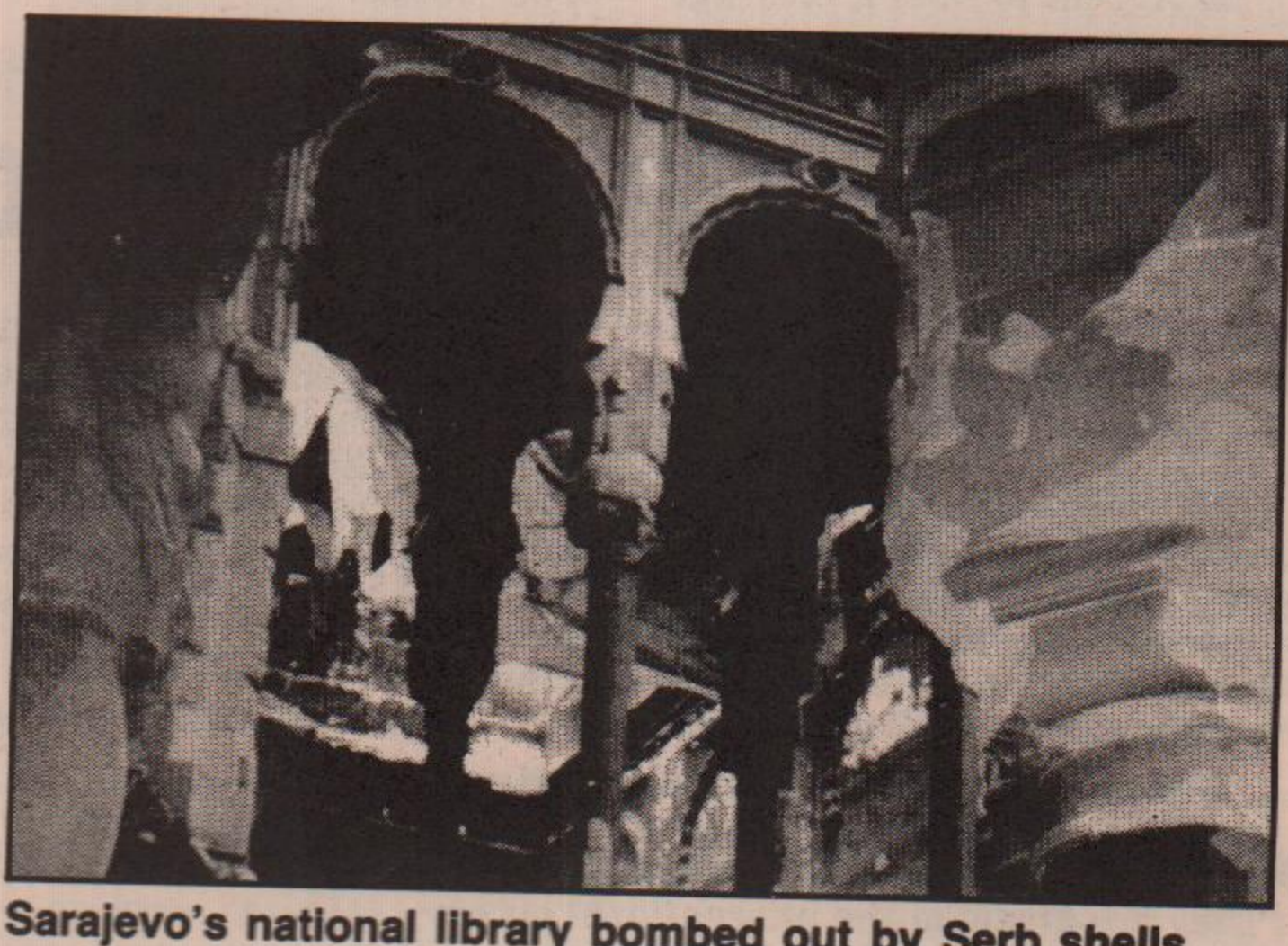
Denied

Vedran is still denied a work permit to play professionally in this country, something he finds hard to understand. He will be playing a piece by Osborne, 'Adagio for Vedran', at the Workers Aid concert.

Several times-married, jovial and, like many musicians, fond of a pint, Vedran Smailovic is serious about two things — his music, and his people — or rather, ordinary people everywhere. His own cello, over 100 years old and irreplaceable, was destroyed by a mortar bomb.

Three of his colleagues have died as a result of the war. 'Don't call this a war,' he insists 'it is a massacre of civilians.' As for the Serb regime, 'Don't think it is just Stalinism,' he says. 'It is Stalinism and fascism. We have watched this grow over ten years, and it is all round the world, Germany, Italy — now they have fascists in the government.'

'We have to think about our children. I am a father. Where am I to go with my children? I have to find a safe place.'



Sarajevo's national library bombed out by Serb shells

A concert for Bosnia at the Royal Academy of Music

14 July at 7.30pm

Marylebone Road, London NW1

From Bosnia: Vedran Smailovic, cellist; Zoran Jancic, pianist; Aida Gavrilova, pianist; Lejla Ibrahimovic, pianist.

Admission: £12; £5 conc.

Youth-craze shocks Serb state

BY KEITH SCOTCHER

IN SERBIA the government has attacked the popularity of 'folk music' amongst the country's young people.

Originally encouraged to promote Serbian chauvinism, the youth-craze has grown to express their hopes for a better existence and an escape from the war's horrors. Folk concerts get bigger crowds than football matches and have taken over large amounts of TV time.

Such large and independently minded gatherings are not popular with the extreme nationalist-dominated state. The government is proposing heavy taxes on the music in an effort to curb its popularity.

A prominent music critic described the it as 'a hideous mixture of hip-hop, techno-rhythms, antiquated disco music, Arabic yowlings and Bosnian love songs'.

Troops threaten Macedonia

MACEDONIA, the only ex-Yugoslav republic to have seceded without war, remains under threat. Serbian forces of the 'Yugoslav National Army' have entered territory claimed by Macedonia, digging trenches and emplacements for tanks.

Serb jets have made forays into Macedonian airspace, notably during a visit by the US secretary of state for international security and arms control. About 1,100 UN troops, including 520 Americans, are patrolling the border.

Workers Aid trucks are on the move

SPANISH firefighters are showing the way for the rest of the trade union and labour movement in the fight to get aid to the besieged north-east Bosnian town of Tuzla.

On 1 July, five lorries and two support vehicles organised by Spanish firefighters from the Basque city of Bilbao, to be joined by two trucks from Sweden, will leave for the Tuzla miners. So many union members have volunteered to take the trucks that a ballot is having to be organised to choose the drivers. The firefighters will be accompanied by three members of the Spanish Workers Aid committee.

Last week three Workers Aid trucks from Britain were heading to Tuzla's miners after a hold-up at the Croatian-Bosnian border for ten days.

Flared

The UN 'great powers' are working round-the-clock to impose their plans for the ethnic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But their efforts continually come up against the resistance of the Bosnian people.

Fighting has flared up around Brcko as Bosnian forces try to break the Serb Chetniks' hold on the northern corridor — the route that is a vital road into Tuzla and northern Bosnia, but also connects Serbia with the Chetnik-held areas in Bosnia and Croatia.

UN envoys are holding sec-

ret discussions with the Bosnian and Croatian governments in order to push through the plan to allow the Chetnik and fascist forces to hold on to 49 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The UN is threatening to cut off aid supplies — upon which most Bosnians are dependent — if the division is not agreed.

The Bosnian war is no longer in the media eye. The human crisis in Rwanda now demands humanitarian attention. But terror in the Balkans is not over.

The UN's appeasement policy towards the Serbian regime will lead to renewed war in Bosnia and elsewhere in the region. People on the Albanian-Greek border are expecting the onset of 'ethnic cleansing'. Montenegro awaits a Chetnik invasion when forces can be withdrawn from Bosnia.

The only 'peace' plan that can stop the barbarism of Bosnia spreading is a plan based on the needs of the working people of the Balkans. But even in Bosnia the leading politicians are pursuing policies designed to rob the workers (see page 7).

Only the rebuilding of international workers' unity between eastern and western Europe can create a movement of working people that is strong enough to stop the rapid escalation of nationalist and fascist forces.

Build for the August convoy

WORKERS Aid for Bosnia is continuing its fight for solidarity between workers in Bosnia and Europe.

Plans are in hand for the next major convoy. Lorries from France, Britain, Spain and Sweden will meet in Split, Croatia, on 5 August. Other countries are being contacted. The aid will go both to Tuzla and to the working-class enclave of Hrasnica, on the outskirts of Sarajevo, which is surrounded by Chetnik-held territory.

Necessary

In Britain, Workers Aid is planning to send a team of supporters with convoy trucks to campaign for support in major cities. In the last few weeks new volunteers have contacted Workers Aid about going on the convoy. Most of these people will join the team campaigning to collect the necessary money and food.

Workers Aid is asking all its supporters to meet and plan what activities they can arrange in their local area — either to be carried out by local people or by the campaigning

team when they arrive. Regular activities — pub and supermarket collections, etc. — are to be held, and particularly factory and workplace visits arranged in advance for the team.

The campaign will seek support for the convoy from every

meeting of trades unionists, students and anti-fascists. The convoy will take not just aid, but also messages from workers East and West who have suffered under privatisation which now also threatens the working people of Bosnia.



Muslim refugees in northern Bosnia

American Jews say 'Arm Bosnia'

ONE of the US's main Jewish organisations has welcomed the US House of Representatives' resolution calling on the United States to unilaterally end the UN arms embargo against Bosnia.

'After far too long, one branch of the US government has said clearly that the time for action has come, and that the genocide in Bosnia must end,' said American Jewish Congress (AJC) president David Kahn. He condemned the arms embargo for denying Bosnian Muslims the right to self-defence.

Camden shows unity with Kazakh miners

BY LIZ LEICESTER

LOCAL government workers in north London are sending a message of solidarity to miners in Kazakhstan who are struggling for the right to strike.

Two thousand miners struck over wages and conditions between 18 May and 6 June and some have been victimised by management. The miners are in serious difficulties, with earnings of \$30-\$40 per month — but they are not paid in full or on time.

An emergency motion from the Camden branch of the union UNISON, in response to an appeal for support from the Independent Miners' Union of Kazakhstan, notes the situation of the miners, and:

■ Agrees to send a message

of support and solidarity to the miners in their fight to build an independent trade union.

■ Agrees a donation of £50 to the fund for victimised strikers.

■ Asks Camden trades council to circulate the IMU letter, which expresses confidence in international trade union solidarity.

Organise

■ Agrees to organise a lobby and protest and any other appropriate activity to draw attention to the miners' struggle.

■ The IMU is asking trade union organisations for financial help for these men, and also for financial support for those whom the administration has illegally sacked for taking part in the strike.

The IMU asks to be informed about any decisions taken to give material support.

Donations should be sent to: Settlement Account 695960 at Kredsobank of Karaganda, MFO 191801513, Index 470055, Kazakhstan.

Any document authorising the transfer of money should indicate that it is a 'Charitable Contribution for Authorised Activity' (in Russian *Blagotvoritel'nyy vnos na ustavnuyu deyatel'nost*), otherwise half the money will be removed for taxes.

Expressions of support in telegrams and faxes were very much appreciated by the strikers. You may directly send messages to the Kazakhstan IMU (fax number 7-3212-577293), and also, to urge a settlement of strikers demands and reinstatement of dismissed workers, to

the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (fax numbers 7-3272-626544 and 7-3272-637633) and the general director of Karagandacoal, Gori Present (fax number 7-3212-580795 and 7-3212-592466).

To bring pressure to bear on the government of Kazakhstan for infringing the international laws covering the rights of trade unions and hired workers, the Kazakhstan IMU also suggests protests to the Administrative Council of the International Labour Office (CH-1211, Geneva 22, Switzerland).

Workers Press would also appreciate being informed of any expressions of solidarity — fax number 071-582 8834.

■ Copies of the letter from the Independent Miners Union are available from Workers Press PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

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OUTLAWED by the Indonesian dictatorship, the independent Indonesian Prosperous Labour Union, SBSI, which has won growing support in a wave of strikes for decent wages and conditions, is continuing to defy arrests and state terrorism.

The independent union's leader, Muchtar Pakpahan, was released without charges after police questioning last week. 'They are afraid of the international outcry if they hold him any longer or charge him,' said SBSI vice-chair Rekson Siliban.

In Medan, north Sumatra, where five union branch officers were among workers detained following strikes and rioting in April, thousands of workers walked out again on 9 June, following the arrest of a cigarette factory worker. The 300 cigarette factory workers took their Chinese supervisors hostage.

Ban

Another 1,500 workers at a herbal medicine factory in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, went on strike over pay and conditions.

The interior ministry's ban on the SBSI

'from carrying out any kind of activity instructed security forces to take action if it was defied.

The government only recognises its official union, the SPSP, although last month a senior army officer, Lt General R Hartono, reaffirming the military's intention of intervening in industrial affairs admitted that the independent SBSI had championed workers' genuine grievances.

When a 40-strong textile workers delegation from Bandung went to Jakarta to lobby MPs, however, saying the official union had failed them, security forces surrounded them, and took ten workers into custody together with their lawyer.