



Workers Press

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Workers need alternative to parliamentary Labour

FALLING APART AT THE SEAMS!

IN THESE freewheeling days of the enterprise economy and the opportunity-knocks culture — embraced wholeheartedly by 'new Labour' — we perhaps shouldn't have been surprised that House of Commons Speaker Betty Boothroyd thought that the Sir Jerry Wiggins scandal was merely an 'unpleasant matter' to be swept under the parliamentary carpet where it couldn't do any more harm.

But harm it has done, along with the many other examples of spivery in the 'House' that have erupted from the depths.

The fabric of the British state is falling apart at the seams and in the coming months there will have to be an emergency operation to shore it up by its faithful servants — Tory and Labour MPs especially.

After the preposterous claims by some Tories that the Nolan recommendations would see the end of the representation of the 'professional classes' in parliament (some chance!), it 'looks as though the party whips have done a deal which may seem clever to them but which impresses no one outside' ('Guardian' editorial, 23 May).

'It makes it look as though the political class is wriggling to avoid legitimate investigation.'

What this means is that Tory and Labour whips have colluded to let old Sir Jerry off.

After admitting that he used Sebastian Coe's name to table amendments on the Gas Bill that would benefit a firm he represents, and then saying he was sorry, Betty says: 'I trust this is the last occasion I shall be obliged to inquire into the conduct of a member.'

Onward Christian arms-dealers!

BISHOPS in the Church of England may be willing to get rid of the commandment 'thou shalt not commit adultery' — but it will be far less willing to get rid of the millions that it rakes in from its considerable shares in the arms trade.

According to company records for last year about 90 churches and parishes have shares in the leading arms makers in this country — including Vickers, GEC, British Aerospace and Rolls Royce.

The Church Missionary Society holds 6,000 shares in British Aerospace, which last year started delivering a consignment of Hawkert military trainer jets to Malaysia.

The Young Women's Christian Association has almost ten times as many shares in the same company, with the Church Moral Aid Association holding a modest 4,000 shares.

The Church Commissioners have about £9 million shares in GEC with the central board of finance of the Church of England holding 2 million shares in the company, one of the country's leading arms exporters.

But don't expect the news to bring any great disinvestment. As Marx long ago noted: the Church of England is far more willing to give up 38 of its 39 Articles than one-tenth of its income.

BY MIKE COOKE

Unless Betty has plans to retire shortly, I wouldn't bet any money on this last statement being born out in reality.

In a letter to Peter Hain, Betty says: 'It is my view that the statement [by Sir Jerry] disposes of this unpleasant matter, and no interests of the House would be served by a reference to the Privileges Committee.'

'The private club rather than the public interest has been given priority,' commented the 'Guardian'.

Skeletons

And there are many more skeletons rattling around the parliamentary cupboards of all the parties represented. No wonder so many MPs want privacy legislation and tougher libel laws.

Betty was a right-wing Labour MP before she had to resign the whip to become speaker. Apparently she is well-loved by all sides of the House.

The old arrangement of government with a democratic facade in the advanced capitalist countries is being eaten away by the desire of more individual companies to get an edge, to be on the inside.

Rather than referring to constituencies, we could perhaps be hearing the speaker call on 'the

honourable (!) member for PowerGen, British Gas . . .' But then again such uncharacteristic honesty might be beneath the dignity of the old place.

Before, such arrangements between companies and MPs were kept very quiet. Now knowledge of them is erupting everywhere — and not just in Britain.

France, Spain, Greece, Germany, Italy, the US, Japan and others have all had their scandals involving government corruption in the last few years.

The Labour Party is tied hand and foot to this system, of which it has been an integral part.

Labour leader Tony Blair and shadow chancellor Gordon Brown spend most of their spare

time buttering up big business and assuring it that their interests will be safe under a 'new Labour' government.

How is the working class to find the true political representation of its interests?

For more than 100 years in Britain it has looked to the parliamentary institutions and since the early years of this century to the Labour Party as its representative in these institutions.

Capitalism is being forced to find new ways to keep its control of the working class because the old ones have collapsed.

Internationally the most significant of these ways was Stalinism which appeared to many to offer an alternative to capitalist exploitation but in reality

only offered betrayal and even worse forms of oppression to the working class and the peasants of the world.

In Britain, capitalism expects new things of Labour in controlling the working class. No longer can Labour dole out reforms like sweets to keep the 'children' quiet.

Changes

With these changes in political relations, the working class and those who oppose capitalism — young and unemployed people, environmental protesters, refugee and immigrant workers — need to break out of the parliamentary straitjacket and form their own political representation, a new socialist

party. This party must be internationalist and international.

Many workers will continue to look to parliament and to the Labour Party for some time, but a start is needed on building this party. It tasks will include challenging Labour outside and inside parliament.

But this is not just an objective necessity. There are also possibilities that need to be built on.

This is the conclusion that the WRP has arrived at and it made a decision to work towards this at its last congress.

We want to join with others who are coming to this conclusion also. Get in touch with Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Tel: 0171-387 0564. Fax: 0171-387 0569.

Demonstration against Ivory Coast repression

Members of the Ivorian Relief Action Group (IRAG) in London protested outside the Ivory Coast embassy on 18 May against the massacres and systematic repression of all those who oppose the autocratic regime of the ruling PDCI-party.

The date was chosen to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the barbaric attack on the Youpougon student campus. On 17 and 18 May 1991, after the massacre of 4,000 Guebie in the western region of the Ivory Coast and the extermination of 300 Sanwi in the south-east, the PDCI sent its army into the campus when the students were sleeping.

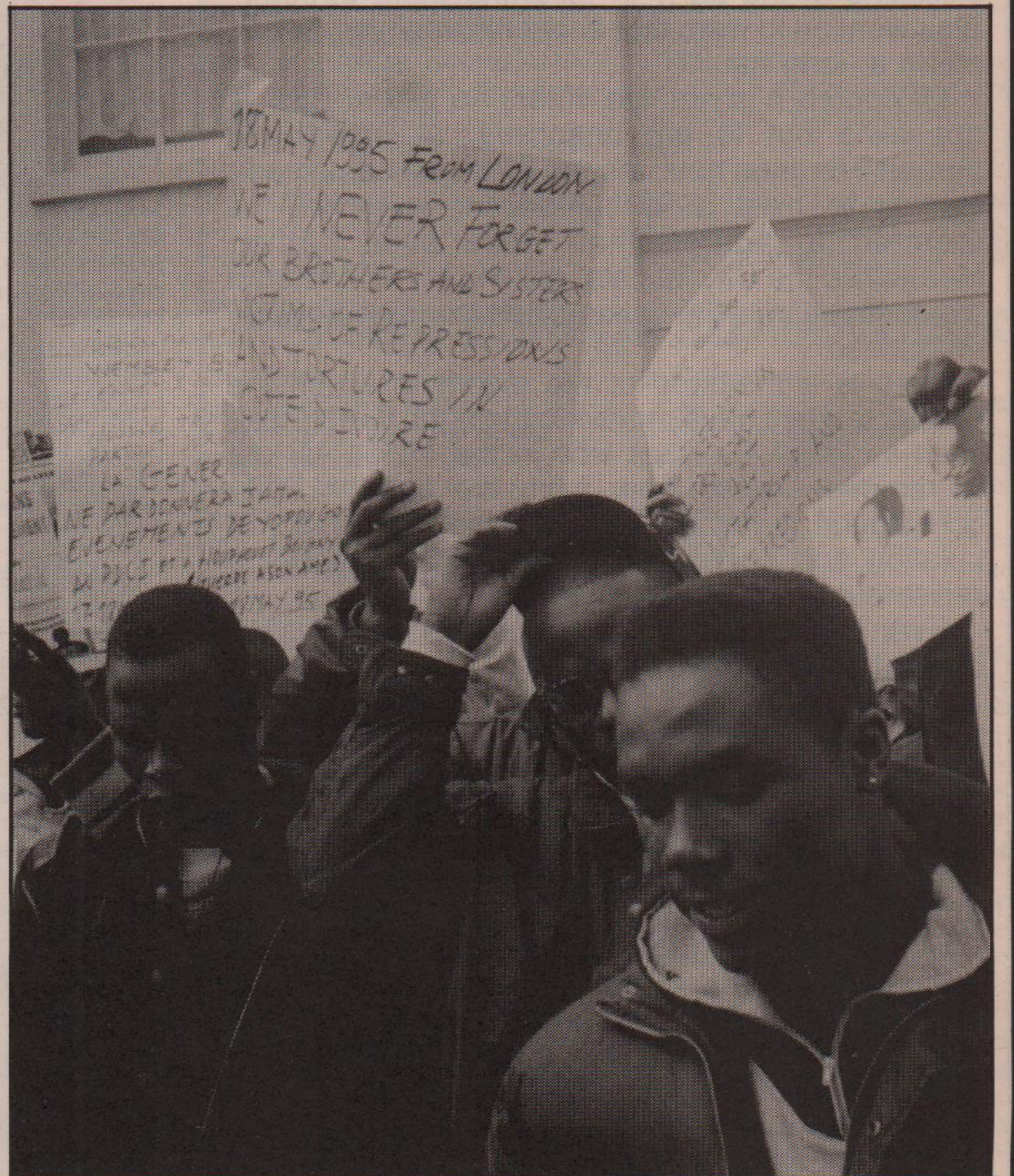
Hundreds of the students were badly injured, many were raped, and many more have disappeared, presumably killed by the army.

The IRAG also condemned the arrest and imprisonment of opposition journalists and independent media — the PDCI controls the state media — and demanded their release along with the hundreds of trade unionists and students who are incarcerated as prisoners of conscience.

Most of the members of IRAG came to Britain to escape the murderous regime in the Ivory Coast and have applied for political asylum.

But other dissidents have been refused entry. Under the Asylum Bill there has been a 100 per cent refusal rate to Ivory Coast asylum seekers as the Tories implement the racism of 'Fortress Europe'.

The organisation and actions of the IRAG reflects the growing radicalism of immigrant groups in Britain. Many immigrants, despite their precarious status as political refugees and asylum seekers, are taking the lead in fighting for amnesty for refugees and against the racist attacks of the British state.



Demonstration at Ivory Coast's London embassy Photo: Bronwen Handyside

New numbers for Workers Press?

As reported last week there are some changes in the contact numbers for Workers Press.

Most importantly our telephone and fax numbers have been changed:

- Telephone 0171-387 0564.
- Fax 0171-387 0569.

We hope this doesn't cause

too much confusion. Our address remains as PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB, although in a few weeks there may be a small change in the post code.

Keep your eyes peeled! Why not send money payable to 'Workers Press'?

Because of the special supplement inside, this week's issue is only four pages.

African Liberation Day march

'Not just charity but complete liberation'
Assemble at 1pm
Kennington Park, London SE11.
To Trafalgar Square for rally.
Oval tube.

Health service workers want strike action!

BY STUART CARTER
SALFORD MENTAL HEALTH
UNISON BRANCH SECRETARY

PUBLIC service union members in the health service have voted by 91 per cent to take industrial action, including strikes, and to reject the offers by the pay review bodies.

UNISON has 440,000 members in the NHS. Pay is negotiated separately for nurses, midwives, and the ancillary, ambulance, administrative and clerical staffs, and other groups.

However all have received similar offers of only 1 per cent guaranteed increase in basic. Anything on top of that is to be decided in local negotiations. The government wants to introduce local negotiation of pay and conditions to weaken trade union organisation, reduce costs and to prepare the full privatisation of the NHS.

Although the health trusts currently operate like businesses and compete for contracts in the internal market that the Tories have created, they have little control over the pay and conditions of staff because these are set by national agreement.

Wages and salaries account for 80 per cent of NHS costs. When management say they want more control over costs what they mean is they want to cut pay and conditions of service. This is a necessary step if trusts are to become privatised profit-making bodies.

NHS workers must be supported in their dispute to defend national agreements because it is crucial to the defence of the NHS against privatisation.

The recent vote was a consultation exercise where staff voted in workplace ballots or meetings. UNISON is looking to talks with the government before holding a ballot on industrial action beginning on 5 July.

The Royal College of Nursing is to ballot its members on dropping their ban on industrial action. The result will be known on 29 June. However the College is saying that it would only be prepared to take action short of striking.

Postponed

The Royal College of Midwives has postponed a ballot on industrial action after the government offered talks about grading. The Health Visitors' Association is to ballot their members on limited industrial action.

The dispute is not just about nurses and midwives, although they have had most publicity. It is about low pay among ancillary, administrative and clerical staffs and all other NHS groups — except the senior managers!

UNISON members from Prestwich hospital, where there was a 98 per cent vote for strike action, spoke to Workers Press. 'We work hard and 1 per cent is an insult,' said Lydia Collins. 'We won't accept local negotiations', said Debbie Derbyshire, a UNISON steward, 'because then they will stop our enhancements for nights, weekends and bank holidays. They will try and cut sick pay and so on.'

On the RCN, Debbie said: 'They are taking a very soft approach which won't frighten the government. Refusing to do paperwork would be just a token gesture. We should have a national strike, everyone together.'

During UNISON's consultation there was a concerted campaign by managers to persuade workers to accept the deal.

Many trusts made local offers of 3 per cent in the hope that staff would fall into the trap of accepting local bargaining. But UNISON members were warned that they would pay a heavy price in years to come if they gave up national agreements.

Danger

If a strike ballot was held there would be as massive majority for action by UNISON members.

The main danger is that UNISON negotiators recommend some compromise deal (the press are already talking about 'local pay in a national framework') or that UNISON will follow the RCN or the Health Visitors' Association and push limited action which would be divisive, drawn out, ineffective and ultimately demoralising.

Because they have a higher public profile, nurses and midwives may be offered a better deal while other staff groups, many of whom are paid below low-pay thresholds, are pushed further behind.

All NHS workers must stand together and put a stop to moves to break up national agreements on pay conditions.

Lecturers and Ford shop stewards support Tuzla Trade Union Convoy

UNIVERSITY lecturers in conference at Weston-super-Mare last weekend acclaimed the July trade union convoy to Tuzla, and raised over £1,000 for its support. The cash will be channelled through the organisation Academic Lifeline for Bosnia.

The summer council of the Association of University Teachers, responding to a move from Aberdeen delegates, amended a previously tabled motion of solidarity with academics and academic-related staff in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to include endorsement of the support for the July convoy agreed by the Scottish TUC at its conference in Perth last month.

There was warm applause when it was announced that Leicester University lecturer, Paul Henderson, would be travelling with the convoy.

Speaking in support of the amended motion, Aberdeen delegate Terry Brotherstone said that the spirit of the Executive motion was such that Paul would be in effect AUT's representative seeking contacts with colleagues in the University of Tuzla and other academic institutions. He stressed also the value attached to the work leading to this convoy by trade unionists in Tuzla, notably the miners who had supported the NUM in the 1984-85 strike.

The fact that their colleagues in Western Europe were concerned with their political struggle, and saw their battle to maintain multi-ethnic communities as being in the forefront of the fight against the rise of neo-fascism throughout Europe, was as important as the humanitarian aid itself.

Alluding to the recent Channel 4 documentary made by Michael Foot and Jill Craigie, Brotherstone stressed that it was no longer possible to separate the question of humanitarian aid from that of taking sides in the conflict.

But the convoy had no sectarian purpose: it had the support of socialists in Serbia and trade unionists in Croatia amongst many others.

The motion, which was passed 'by acclaim' reads:

'Council deplores the devastation and appalling conditions of the civil war for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. It notes the severe disruption to the universities which is yet another consequence of this tragedy and understands the great difficulties being experienced by staff and students.'

'Council instructs the executive committee to collaborate with the World University Service and other organisations in supporting the Academic Lifeline for Bosnia in helping to maintain academic activity under such trying conditions.'

Enthusiasm

'Council also notes that the STUC Congress has expressed enthusiasm for the trade union humanitarian aid convoy to Bosnia being organised in July this year and called upon the STUC General Council to:

(1) publicise this convoy widely in the trade and labour movement;

(2) renew and redouble its fundraising efforts, particularly to support this convoy;

(3) urge affiliated bodies, wherever possible, to supply and equip a lorry to join the convoy;

(4) collaborate wherever possible with requests for assistance from the organisers — the Tuzla Trade Union District and the British trade unionists supporting the operation.

'Council shares the enthusiasm of STUC and therefore instructs the executive committee to publicise this convoy and its requirements amongst AUT members and to support the convoy appropriately through the Academic Lifeline for Bosnia.'

The collection for the convoy, plus a donation from central union funds, came to £1,086.72.

Shop stewards from Ford's engine plant at Dagenham have also agreed to support the July convoy and voted to donate £100.

Sheffield college strikes back

SHEFFIELD lecturers in the union NATFHE took strike action on three days, 9, 10 and 11 May. This was part of a national week of action as well as the pursuit of a local agreement on pay. Like other public sector workers, further and adult education teachers have been forced into a 'twin track' strategy of pursuing national and local agreements with employers who are pushing through a settlement clearly based on government guidelines.

Behind this three-year-long dispute is the crisis in public funding. Nationally, the sector is in debt, with 50 colleges owing £20,000,000.

The employers, part of the new bureaucratic 'boss' class, are awarded grossly-inflated salaries but seek to solve the crisis by the introduction of punitive contracts, expanding contact hours for lecturers, and reducing holidays, to prepare the way for mass redundancies and the closure of whole programmes, buildings and other educational services.

The ideological smokescreen for this and the chaos of mismanagement, malpractice and, in some cases, large scale corruption, is 'quality control'.

In plain English read union-busting and redundancies — the wrecking of an education service.

Sheffield College, the largest in the country, is considering the closure of two major sites, one of them a purpose-built former education authority construction engineering college, and is seeking 300 redundancies, over 200 of which are to be teaching staff, one in four.

The mass meeting held during the strike received widespread messages of support from the other main teacher unions and members of the public-sector union, UNISON. There was also an important discussion on developing a public campaign to defend further education, co-operating with other education and public sector campaign groups.

Shell out of Nigeria!

Fifty protesters outside a Shell shareholders' meeting broke through police lines to show their anger against the company's activities in West Africa, on Thursday 18 May in London.

The protest was organised by Shell Out, an environmental and political umbrella group.

Leaflet were handed out urging shareholders to force Shell to withdraw from south-east Nigeria and stop polluting the air and rivers and colluding with state repression against the Ogoni people.

It is thought that state forces have killed 2,000 Ogonis and made 30,000 homeless.

Imprisoned Nigerian writer Ken SaroWiwa has accused the company of environmental devastation.

The protesters at the shareholders meeting staged a sit-down protest and two burned a Shell flag. Police made six arrests.



Blair reassures capitalists

BY KEN SINGER

Commerce meeting in Aberdeen he told business leaders that they would be consulted about a minimum wage.

Thus a Blair-led government would be totally subservient to the interests of big business and the sharks in the city.

The 'fat cats' were also told by Blair that he would seriously think about keeping the present anti-union laws introduced by the Tories.

Blair is to tour various business-interest meetings to talk about the 'new' Labour Party

and its so-called 'neutrality'.

On the other hand, there don't seem to be any plans for him to speak to factory workers, staff in the NHS or teachers and parents about how a 'new Labour' government will fight for their interests!

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Inside left

Serious, comrades?

THE Name of Allah' shrieked one blond front-page depicting the Oklahoma city bombing.

Instant pundits pontificated about the reasons for Islamic fanaticism, while Labour MP Greville Janner urged the Home Secretary to keep 'all our own fundamentalists' out of the country. In the United States itself, Arab Americans faced hate attacks and death threats.

The arrest of Timothy J. McVeigh, a member of the 'Michigan Militia', reminded us that terrorism is as American as apple-pie. The Michigan Militia, which says the UN plans to subject America to world socialism, was commanded by a Baptist minister (and a shop owner), for God's sake! Even a Muslim cleric accused of masterminding the World Trade Centre bombing used to be on the CIA's payroll, waging the West's war in Afghanistan.

Some Tories, annoyed by US attitudes on Ireland, were gloating that innocent Americans had been killed; though the British state had never perpetrated terrorism. Someone said Oklahoma City after the bombing looked 'like Beirut'. One of the worst bombings in Beirut was carried out by a British SAS major under contract to the CIA.

Exposing anti-Muslim stereotypes, hypocrisy and hysteria, and defending oppressed minorities, is a duty for socialists. But some on the left seem to be going a bit further.

A right-wing group which promotes contempt for democracy, and doesn't seem short of resources, has been active in colleges and elsewhere, spitting hostility against Hindus and gays, declaring homosexuals should not be tolerated, and preaching that it is alright to beat disobedient women.

You'd expect the left to be up in arms, opposing these reactionaries. Instead, the Socialist Workers Party, which runs the Anti-Nazi League, supports their right to free speech. At the London School of Oriental and African Studies, Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) supporters enabled the reactionary group, Hizb ut-Tahrir, to circumvent a college ban, by having a speaker at their meeting.

'Workers Liberty' — which claims to address 'serious socialists' (as distinct from those of us beyond the pale of Labour Party membership) — has invited a Hizb ut-Tahrir speaker to debate at its summer school. Yes, that is the same journal whose supporters accused other socialists — from Tony Cliff of the SWP to yours truly — of being 'antisemitic', because we oppose Zionism!

Perhaps they'll ask Hizb ut-Tahrir's spokesman about the leaflet distributed in some London colleges attacking the National Union of Students as run by 'Jews, homosexuals and Labour Party members'?

'Workers Liberty' and Hizb ut-Tahrir both oppose a secular democratic state in Palestine; but the former defends the legitimacy of the Zionist State of Israel, whereas the latter advocates restoration of the Islamic Caliphate over the Middle East! As 'Workers Liberty' editor Sean O'Connell remarked in another context, 'you can get the most weird and wonderful discussions' at some journalists' conferences.

When poor people express anti-imperialist feeling through religious fervour, socialists should discuss with them. But Hizb ut-Tahrir, with its well-to-do white converts, isn't fighting oppression. For Muslim women it represents oppression. Islamic reactionaries are not as serious a threat as Zionism, but they're not our allies either.

Charlie Pottins

Secret of Japan's 'a hidden history'

Labour and right-wing trade union leaders, along with members of the ruling class, see in Japan's 'business unionism' the secret of that country's economic 'success'. Such class collaboration is supposed to be the result of the suppression of a general strike called by Japan's industrial unions early in 1947 by the US occupying forces, commanded by General MacArthur.

Using information in a little-read book, 'Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power', by Joe Moore, published in 1983 by the University of Wisconsin, CLIFF SLAUGHTER argues in a two-part article that a revolutionary situation in Japan in 1946 was defused by a lack of revolutionary leadership and the betrayals of the Communist Party and that understanding of this betrayal is vital for comprehending the current collapse of Stalinism.

This week, Slaughter motivates the need for this study in the light of the fall of Stalinism and describes the struggle of the Japanese workers up to the collapse of the government in April 1946. Next week, he will go into the role of the Communist Party in defusing the revolutionary situation and how its conceptions and aims were almost identical with those of the US occupiers.



After the Japanese surrender in 1945, US occupation troops under General MacArthur entered the country

Introduction

AN ALTERNATIVE, longer title for this review article would be: 'Is the fall of Stalinism a qualitative change in the world relationship of class forces? Can today's remnants of Stalinism play the same role as they have for the last three-quarters of a century?'

At first sight this might seem to refer to an entirely different subject matter — let us see!

The 'hidden history' of Japan's 'success' was unearthed in a book published in 1983, 'Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power', by Joe Moore (University of Wisconsin Press).

Why am I presenting a book published in 1983, and saying it is of inestimable importance, only now, 12 years later? The short and painful answer is: because I didn't know of its existence until now.

Perhaps it is instructive to explain how it came to our notice. In the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International), we have for some two years been engaged in a difficult but rich discussion on the significance of the collapse of Stalinism.

The basic conclusion of this has been that the collapse of Stalinism represents a *qualitative change* in the relationship of class forces.

Most important, the situation created by this change presents Trotskyists with the most important challenge in our history: to *now* build the world party of the socialist revolution in entirely new conditions, with the main barrier between the working class and Marxism removed. Yet the working class needs to reconstruct its movement as a whole because of the damage inflicted on its consciousness by decades of Stalinism.

To recognise this qualitative change has not been easy. Among the points made in the discussion was that there is no longer a Stalinist apparatus capable of carrying out the comprehensive international betrayals of the past. In particular, Stalin's deal with Churchill and Roosevelt at the end of World War II, and its counter-revolutionary consequences, permitted a temporary but long restabilisation of capitalism.

In a draft chapter of veteran Trotskyist Bill Hunter's forthcoming autobiography, which covers that period, he refers to the fact that all over Germany, after the Nazi surrender in 1945, there sprang up hundreds of workers' councils, and that in Japan big struggles for workers' control of production took place. Checking the sources for this, I found Moore's book on Japan. It is a revelation!

A theoretical preliminary

BEFORE summarising the content and the lessons of Moore's book, a short interpolation about theoretical implications.

In the discussion about the significance of the collapse of Stalinism, we had to relearn the importance of a dialectical approach. We had to see that the Stalinism of the last three-quarters of a century as a totality of differentiated parts and at the same time itself a specific part of another totality, that of the world class struggle in the imperialist epoch (see Workers Press, 8 April).

We had to learn to understand that the remaining fragments of Stalin-

Success': — part 1

ism, even though still often highly dangerous and constituting severe obstacles to the working class (South Africa, China), no longer have the same relationship to imperialism or to each other; there has been a qualitative change.

Looking back at the role of Stalinism at the end of World War II, we are brought face to face with another aspect of Marx's method.

Marx remarks in his 'Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy' that 'the anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of the ape'.

Doesn't this method fly in the face of the truth that we have to understand things by understanding their origins and development?

But Marx is making a different point.

In the historical record (as in the archaeological record of remains of apes and our knowledge of living ape species) there is a mass of material. We only know what details and what trends are most significant in this at first undifferentiated mass of evidence by seeing what has proved to be significant in what has survived and developed.

In trying to understand the evolution of the human species, for example, we only know what to look for in 'the anatomy of the ape' by sharpening our understanding of what are the most decisive elements of *human* 'anatomy' — actually, the hand, the most important organ for labour; erect posture, for the freeing of the hands; the human brain and the necessary thin skull-case, etc.

The impulsion for the Workers International to go back to the way in which Stalinism was able to play the decisive role, for world capitalism, of suppressing the post-war revolution in 1945-46, came from the necessity *today* to fight for an understanding of the new situation created by the whole development since then and finally by Stalinism's collapse.

A Marxist, revolutionary understanding of society, of the class struggle, must always be an active understanding. An understanding from the point of view of how the working class achieves consciousness of what it must *do*.

'The philosophers have interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it' (Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach').

An insidious myth

Moore's book demonstrates irrefutably that the content of apparently obvious and unchallengeable social facts — in this case, the 'fact' that Japanese workers have a historically conditioned 'national character', a propensity to collaborate sensibly with the great monopolies which exploit them; that this discipline and national solidarity was the secret of Japan's post-war recovery and of Japanese capitalism's subsequent business success — is *the class struggle between labour and capital*, however much this content is overlaid and distorted by bourgeois ideology.

This blows sky-high the insidious myth being peddled by Labour and trade union bosses as well as by employers that European and American workers would do well to emulate their disciplined and collaborative Japanese counterparts — that is, accept no-strike deals and sweetheart contracts between multinationals

and what will in effect be company unions.

Spheres of influence

IT IS common knowledge that at the end of World War II Stalin came to a series of agreements, at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, with the British and American imperialist leaders, Churchill and Roosevelt. At the centre of these was the division of Europe into 'spheres of influence'.

The Red Army occupied eastern Europe and the British and Americans western Europe. Germany was divided. The 'anti-fascist' alliance of the war was in reality retained, in the form of a guarantee that the Communist Parties would control the working class in the capitalist countries within the framework of capitalist parliamentary democracy, even where hundreds of thousands of workers were armed, having fought in the anti-Nazi resistance.

Trotskyists fighting for the reconstruction of the Fourth International, against the pressure of Stalinism, have always rightly stressed that it is this betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracy that is the basis of capitalism's post-war recovery and subsequent post-war boom, and later of so-called 'neo-capitalism', 'late capitalism', 'technological revolution', and so on.

In order to deepen our understanding of the magnitude and the implications of the change brought about by Stalinism's collapse, it is surely now important to study in more detail what happened in the class struggle in 1945-46.

Conventional wisdom

HERE is the 'history' of the immediate post-war period, according to conventional wisdom:

■ Japan's leaders surrendered immediately after the destruction of 40 per cent of all Japanese city buildings by Allied bombing, followed by the nuclear holocaust of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

■ The Japanese ruling class retained its state and government apparatus, including the Emperor, and its links with the great business monopolies (*zaibatsu*), but under the control and supervision of the occupying US forces commanded by General MacArthur.

■ The economy of the country was in chaos, food was desperately scarce, millions were homeless and deserted the towns for the countryside, depleting the industrial workforce, and inflation grew worse by the day.

■ There was considerable industrial unrest, culminating in public service strikes in the winter of 1946-47 and the unions gave notice of a general strike in January 1947.

■ MacArthur intervened and suppressed the general strike. Thenceforward stability began to be restored and Japan's post-war forward march began.

A very different story

SO MUCH for the conventional wisdom. Why was Japanese capitalism



Hiroshima after the bomb, 1945: during Allied bombing 40 per cent of Japan's city buildings were destroyed

able to overcome defeat, chaos and, as we now know, intense class conflicts?

Was it — as anyone can read in the history books — because the victorious democratic powers and their army of occupation overcame the worst elements in the Japanese ruling class and imposed a parliamentary democracy in which the working class, its parties and its unions could have a place?

In such spurious versions of history the working class of course has no active role. Moore's book tells a very different story indeed.

From August 1945 to the spring of 1946, there was a working-class upsurge of truly revolutionary nature. The working class came forward in struggle as a force which could have overthrown Japanese capitalism and taken power.

Then, from May 1946 to January 1947, the working class shifted from the revolutionary offensive to defence of its class interests by means of national industrial unions within the framework of capitalist economic reconstruction.

After the banning of the general strike of January 1947, the Japanese workers entered a period in which they had only virtual business unions tied to the monopolies.

Moore shows that these were the real stages of the struggle, as against the 'official' version of a year and a half of labour unrest culminating in a failed general strike, during a period in which the occupying US Army oversaw a transition to parliamen-

tary democracy, with the Japanese working class reverting at last to its traditional discipline and conservatism.

What follows is only a brief summary of the rich and detailed analysis of this sequence of events provided by Joe Moore.

Production control strikes

IN JAPAN in 1945 and 1946 the working class fought in 'production control strikes' which had the same revolutionary nature as the workers' councils set up in St Petersburg in 1917, in Berlin and Turin after World War I, and in Germany in 1945.

By the spring of 1946, inspired first by a workers' take-over of one of Japan's main newspapers, many factories had been taken over, with production continuing under the management of the workers.

Furthermore, food-distribution centres in many parts of the country were taken over. The movement gathered strength nationally, resulting in several mass demonstrations, until in May, General MacArthur threatened physical suppression of the movement.

Throughout these struggles, the ruling class was divided on how to deal with them. The Socialist and Communist parties, however, gave no direction or leadership to the work-

ers in struggle, interested only in utilising them as pressure to gain for themselves a share in government office.

Yet there was a real possibility of socialist revolution. The daily life, indeed the very survival, of all the working people of Japan, depended on an answer to the economic chaos gripping the country.

From the working class came an answer: 'production control'. But this was naturally not the 'rational' answer sought by the ruling class and the occupation authorities. It raised openly and directly the question of private property in the means of production and the power of capital, which meant that a clash was inevitable.

By January 1946 farmers and other citizens, following the example of the workers in the factories, were demanding control over food production and distribution. Within a few weeks, all kinds of complex and large-scale exchanges were going on between miners, farmers and farm-workers and workers who had occupied chemicals and other plants. Production reached levels higher than under the old management.

By April the government had fallen as a result of these struggles, and it was four full weeks before another administration could be got together. In hundreds of factories and mines the workers had in effect at that moment expropriated the capitalists.

• To be continued next week

New sleaze, Old Corruption

SLEAZE — dontcha just love it? Its stink hangs over the Palace of Westminster much as the foul smells from a Thames dense with effluent used to.

In those days the rotten-borough MPs strolling on the Commons terrace would retch into their silk handkerchiefs liberally sprinkled with eau-de-Cologne.

No longer do the Tories retch at bad smells, so used have they become to the filthy stench of their own corruption. They cherish that stench; it is the air they breathe; they will do nothing to sweeten it.

What other conclusion can be drawn from their indignant response to the Nolan recommendations? What other conclusion flows from John Major's typically spineless decision to appease his back-benchers by turning the issue over to yet another committee?

Major has thrown these curs a bone they'll happily chew over for ages, while continuing to draw salaries and backhanders and other dubious extras.

With a bit of effort these crooks will find ways of procrastinating for months, possibly for years.

Listen to Alan J.C. Duncan, Tory MP for Rutland and Melton. If this young gentleman is to be believed, people of the right calibre simply won't enter the House of Commons for a mere £32,000 a year.

The heart bleeds for these poor chaps who can't possibly make ends meet on a miserable 600 quid a week and are therefore forced to flog their services to big business as 'consultants', question-askers, go-betweens, and fixers.

Their plight will evoke a ready response among wide sections of the British public. But it won't be the response they would like to hear.

The 3 million unemployed know full well what it is to skimp; many of them have had to do so for years on a fraction of what the Alan Duncans of this world are pocketing.

The nurses and the other grossly underpaid health service workers will recognise in Duncan's complaint a disease that they themselves have little opportunity to suffer from: acute inflammatory *cupiditas* or, in plain English, greed.

And those on disability pensions, now being forced to fill in long complicated forms asking damn-fool questions like 'Can you lift a book?', to establish that they really are disabled and not scrounging malingerers — and facing Draconian benefit cuts if they fail to satisfy the cruel new guidelines — these too will no doubt spare a thought for the unfortunate Duncan and his fellow sufferers.

Most of the comment I have heard on this matter in the past week or two is unprintable. Wherever you go and whoever you talk to, the Tories, and indeed the whole House of Commons, are now loathed and held in supreme contempt by nine people out of ten.

BUT IT seems to me a pity that this new-fangled word 'sleaze' has gained ground as a catch-all term for several distinct forms of misconduct.

A 'back-formation' from 'sleazy', which originally was applied to cloth and meant 'flimsy' or 'shoddy', the word 'sleaze' has obvious attractions for headline-writers working against the clock.

Unfortunately they often use it to mean goings-on in the bedroom, when what really matters is goings-on in the boardroom and the political backroom.

So the word has acquired a faintly meretricious ring; between the lines in the bourgeois press, it seems as if we are

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being asked not so much to condemn these Tory rogues as to feel for them a certain sneaking admiration.

The radicals of the early 19th century, who knew their enemy well and voiced their hatred of it with forthright eloquence, called the whole gang 'Old Corruption'. Corrupt they were, and corrupt they remain.

William Cobbett, who listed 'Den of Thieves' alongside 'House of Commons' as examples of 'Nouns of number, or multitude', referred to our rulers also as the 'Thing'.

That gets to the root of the matter in a way that the ambiguous word 'sleaze' fails to do.

For 'Old Corruption' is indeed a dirty thing, an evil thing, a corporate monstrosity riding on our backs and choking the life out of us. It is the supreme sickness of a society in terminal crisis.

And we'll never get rid of the 'Thing' without drastic surgery. Of that we can be sure.

A bishop abashed

I NEVER thought I should find myself feeling sorry for a bishop. But I really couldn't help it, when I saw the poor old Bishop of Edinburgh chewed up and spat out in small pieces by the sensation-hungry ratpack.

Yes, of course, it was his own silly fault. He asked for it, and the press whirlwind he reaped was only what he himself had sown (Hosea, 8:7).

He made two grievous errors ('Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly': 1 Samuel, 26:21).

First, he offended the Blessed Ann Widdecombe, MP, by seeming to condone sexual promiscuity, something his and her God categorically prohibited 3,500 years ago (Exodus, 20:1).

Second, he offended geneticists by saying human beings have a 'deeply implanted genetic thing' instructing them to 'go out and propagate as widely as possible', something his God, who didn't seem to know His own mind for five minutes together, categorically instructed humans to do ('Be fruitful, and multiply': Genesis, 1:28).

One geneticist called the Bishop 'bloody stupid', 'callow', and 'half-informed' for putting forward such a reductionist explanation of human behaviour and, in particular, for the half-baked remark: 'God . . . has given us a built-in sex drive to go out and sow our seeds. He has given us promiscuous genes.'

Now, the Good Book is quite clear on what is expected of a bishop. He must be 'blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; [Not given to wine, no striker [sic!], not greedy of filthy lucre', etc. etc. (1 Timothy, 3:2).

And he must give no 'heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils' (1 Timothy, 4:1).

But the hacks who licked their salacious lips and flayed the Bishop of Edinburgh overlooked a saying attributed to the founder of his religion, who told the scribes and Pharisees that brought him a 'woman taken in adultery', the punishment for which was death by stoning: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' (St John, 8:7).

It's not hard to imagine the headline Lunchtime O'Booze would put on that.

Peter Fryer

Off the rails

BY COLIN PENDLETON

'LET customers off the train first, please', requested the announcement at Victoria underground station.

For a moment I was bewildered, wondering if they meant by preference to other, non-paying travellers, but then I realised: the dreaded, phoney business-babble, 'political correctness' Tory-style, has spread down from British Rail above ground.

Forgive me, from what used to be British Rail. The signs have been up for some time now: 'This station is owned and managed by Railtrack' (and there was I thinking it was still owned by us, the great British public, about whom Tory papers always became so emotional whenever train drivers worked to rule).

Travellers have been renamed 'customers', but had better not expect improved service. Up to £700 million has been spent on carving up the railways ready for privatisation, and the result so far is chaos.

After profitable sidelines like hotels and parcels were hived off, the rest is being broken up into over 100 separate companies, all supposedly trading with each other, while a growing bureaucracy struggles to regulate them.

Railworkers and safety inspectors have expressed fears as to how Railtrack will supervise safety standards in companies which it is supposed to make a profit from.

The huge sums being spent on 're-structuring' for privatisation aren't going on investment either, as the loss of railway workshop jobs shows. No new trains have been ordered this year. As for organisation, the through-ticketing controversy was a warning of what's to come. But there's more.

Passengers — sorry 'customers' — arriving at Victoria recently might have noticed, beyond the popcorn stands and car promotions, a woman be-

hind an unobtrusive little stall offering travel information.

What's wrong with the official information desk? This is it. Railtrack and Network Southeast couldn't agree on allocation of office space.

During the cold spell the information woman was allowed to keep her coat and scarf on, and they've given her a phone to supplement the thick volume of timetables she can thumb through. This is the age of information technology.

Passengers stranded at Clapham Junction when a through train to Waterloo was cancelled last month waited in vain for an announcement about the next train, because the information wasn't available to staff there, being over the company boundary.

And as 'Dr.B. Ching' tells us in 'Private Eye' (19 May), travellers at Richmond station, Surrey, on Saturday 6 May, heard the following announcement: 'At present we have no trains on the North London line or the District Line due to a track failure in the Richmond area, which means the exact train locations are not known! Please note:-

Disrupted

'This station is operated by South West Trains and we have nothing whatsoever to do with this problem which is totally out of our control. We can expect trains to be disrupted for up to an hour! Tickets will be accepted on trains to Waterloo (a long way from North London though).

'Please be patient with the staff on this station as they are employed by South West Trains, not North London Line or London Underground.'

Still, a privatised industry will probably close more rail services altogether. As for that old idea of a fully-integrated planned transport system, come on comrade, you'll be talking about Clause Four next! Don't you want to be modernised — for the 'customers', by van or by train!



Please be patient — stations are nothing to do with the trains!

Milosevic cover-up conspiracy?

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

DOCUMENTS linking Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic with war crimes in Bosnia have been taken from the United Nations Tribunal investigating atrocities in former Yugoslavia, in what looks suspiciously like a cover-up conspiracy.

The documents, handed over to the Hague-based tribunal by a defecting Serb envoy, purport to be secret instructions from the Interior Ministry in Belgrade to Serb Chetnik warlord and criminal Zeljko Raznatovic, or Arkan, for the running of

concentration camps in Bosnia.

The defector, Cedomir Mihailovic, who said he had been responsible for purchasing arms and telecommunications equipment for Serbia, is now reported to be in hiding. So, apparently are the documents.

Papers

South African Judge Richard Goldstone, who is heading the UN war crimes tribunal, initially told reporters that one of the documents did not appear genuine evidence, and later said the papers were 'falsifications'.

But having decided in November to hand them back to

Mihailovic, the tribunal handed them over in January to the BVD, Dutch internal security service, instead.

According to Roger Cohen, of the 'New York Times', Judge Goldstone said last month that the Dutch authorities had shown a receipt from Mihailovic for the return of the documents, but: 'It now transpires that this undated "receipt" was a fake, apparently concocted by the Dutch secret services, who misled Judge Goldstone.'

'It is not clear why the Dutch Interior Ministry lied about the whereabouts of the original documents, but the spokesman for the tribunal said the UN

court was "extremely troubled"' ('International Herald Tribune', 4 May).

The Serb security services have responded to Mihailovic's allegations with material published in the Belgrade weekly 'Vreme', suggesting that the defector had bounced cheques for racehorses and was some kind of swindler.

As Cohen points out, this would not disqualify him as a Serb government agent. Arkan, whom Milosevic's secret service employed, was a well-known criminal, wanted for murder in Sweden, before he led his nationalist cut-throats into Bosnia.

Irish workers strike for pay and conditions

An estimated 10,000 teachers attended a protest march and demonstration in Dublin last Tuesday during the one-day strike called by two of the teacher unions.

Classes for more than 400,000 students were cancelled in some 1,600 schools throughout the state. All secondary schools, almost all community and comprehensive schools and many primary schools were closed.

The strike is the first part of the union campaign to win an early retirement deal for teachers following the rejection of the claim by the coalition government with its Labour Party Minister of Education.

Both the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI) and the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)

plan two further protests in the rest of the country and further stoppages of up to a week in the autumn.

The INTO paid strike pay of £25-£30 to each of its 7,000 members who went on the one-day strike.

This action and the proposals for further strikes is another indication of the strength of the workers and their organisations in the public sector of the Irish economy.

This week also saw the escalation of the dispute at the state-owned postal service, An Post.

About 500 administrative staff, members of the Civil and Public Service Union (CPSU) are operating a work to rule and ban on overtime because of the suspension of workers resisting

attempts by An Post to force through major changes in working practices.

By Tuesday 25 staff had been suspended and the company was reiterating that it would continue to ask workers to start the new procedures which the suspended staff had refused to do.

The union is paying suspended members 'dispute pay' of £74 per week.

The wages and conditions of workers in the Irish public sector services and industries were built up over many years using all the militant methods of a fighting trade unionism which owed everything to the tradition of syndicalism in the Irish struggles.

Now these wages and conditions are under attack as the

Irish government, under pressure from the European Union to reduce its national debt, is forced to attempt to cut state expenditure.

And, also, the wages of the workers in the state industries are a level for other workers to aim at. This applies particularly to the industries owned by the monopolies who are attempting to impose cheap-labour conditions.

The Irish government policy is subservient to the dictates of these monopolies who were induced to invest with huge financial grants.

As the state is forced to take back all the gains won by the working class, the old methods of syndicalism are clearly not adequate to withstand the attacks.

France: Chirac no answer



Chirac promises more privatisation, tax breaks for businesses, cuts in benefits, more VAT: no change from Socialist presidency

BY VERONIQUE RAKOSE

EVEN IF the French presidential election resulted in no great surprises — despite the Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin unexpectedly coming out in the lead in the first round — we must look more closely to fully understand what has happened.

The second round of the French presidential election gave the right-wing Gaullist Party candidate Jacques Chirac the presidency with 52.7 per cent, in front of Jospin, who scored 47.3 per cent.

The first thing is the enormous rate of abstentions (nearly 20 per cent) and nil votes (about 5 per cent).

This means that 25 per cent of the French population did not agree with the programme of either candidate.

Another fact is the massive participation of young people, and particularly the students.

Violent

This is easily explained. During the last eight years government cuts at universities and colleges forced them to struggle through violent strikes and demonstrations.

Many said that by voting for Chirac they have voted for a real change in French politics.

But what are the changes that Chirac has talked about during his campaign?

More privatisation, priority given to reduce social taxes for

businesses, cutting benefits, restructuring the educational system, increase of VAT . . .

Chirac is actually following the same programme carried out by the socialist government for the last 14 years. Why?

Joke

Because those so-called, democratic elections are a joke. There is nothing for the working class from them.

Why? Because whatever party is represented in the assembly, it will be a party that defends the interest of the bourgeoisie and not of the proletariat.

The defeated Socialists are preparing workers to co-operate with the new government.

The Stalinist party has called for a popular front with the left groups against the right wing.

The leadership of the trade unions have announced their decision to talk about the new government proposals rather than fight them.

One thing is revealed by the elections, and that is the need for the working class to have a real political representation.

They need to wipe out the capitalist exploiters and take power — destroy the bourgeois state and take control of the means of production.

They need to find their way to a true socialist state, in France, in Britain and everywhere else.

Never before has Marx's slogan had such relevance: 'Workers of the world unite!'

Book review

Slating a work of fantasy

'An Interference of Light',
by Russel Celyn Jones,
Viking 1995.

IN THE dying months of the last Labour government a deal was struck with the Liberals to keep the Callaghan administration in power.

The deal also involved Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist Party, who offered their support in the lobbies if the government would pay industrial compensation to members of the Transport and General Workers Union, formerly members of the North Wales Quarrymen's Union, for the chronic forms of silicosis the men had suffered after working in the slate quarries.

Needless to say, this deal was ratted on. I suppose that until then, certainly in the post-war period North Wales was seen as a holiday area of mountains, seaside resorts, uncertain weather and a sullen population who spoke a strange language — most likely when English speakers were in their midst.

Ironically the most ubiquitous product of North Wales is not lamb or sticks of Rhyl rock, but slate. The roofing of most dwellings in the British industrial heartlands, castles in France, snooker tables, anything you name made of slate until the early 1960s then it will have originated from a small mountainous region in North-West Wales no bigger than the area covered by Birmingham.

What remains today of this vast industrial enterprise are the mountains of spoil-heaps and vacant blue galleries in the Llanberis Pass, Bethesda and the Nantlle valley along with hundreds of smaller enterprises that litter every hillside. There are also the deep unseemly caverns of Blaenau Ffestiniog. What also has remained un-

world is the remarkable and bitter history of trade union and class struggle which the quarrying community carried out against the owners, police forces drafted from metropolitan centres of England, and the military.

Fortunately the monumental work of Merfyn Jones, 'The History of the North Wales Quarrymen', which deals with the Penrhyn lockout of 1900-03, has begun to rectify this gap in the history of the 'British' working class.

Similarly there is a lack of English-language literary reference to this community. With the exception of Alexander Cordell's 'Novel of Wales' and the few short stories of Kate Roberts that have been translated into English, little of the rich literary contribution that this community has made to world literature has been made available to English-speakers. (Indeed Kate Roberts has been hailed on the continent as the Welsh Maupassant.)

It was with interest, then, that I watched by chance a discussion of Russell Celyn Jones's recent novel, 'An Interference of Light' on BBC 2's 'The Late Show'. Leading that 'discussion' was Beatrix Campbell, ex-Stalinist hack and now self-advertising expert on the sins of anything or anyone who does not have the suffix 'post' before it or them.

Coven

Campbell and the rest of the 'Late Show' post-modernist coven greatly approved of this work. Having read the novel it is not difficult to see why.

The novel portrays the destruction of a 'traditional' community as a result of a two year strike (1937-39), against the quarry boss, Lord Elusen, who hails not from the English aristocracy but, like his real-life historic counterpart, Lord Pen-

ers, privateers, swindlers and speculators.

The narrator, Aaron Lewis, is a company spy hired from the American Pinkerton Agency before the strike to discover the quarrymen's secrets which enabled them to predict the quality of a seam of slate.

The importance of this is that the 'secret' lies at the heart of the craftsmen's negotiating strength, given the version of the 'butty' system that formed the basis of day-to-day bargaining.

Before the spy discovers the secret, the management have

strike is waged as an industrial 'jihad' led by non-conformist fundamentalists justifying their actions, as the Cromwellians had done before them, from Old Testament scriptures.

Well, as any post-modernist worth their salt knows, such a tyranny of 'totalising discourse' deserves to be deconstructed. After all, what is more totalising and tyrannous than an all-out two-year strike!

Lewis returns after 20 years and by coincidence seduces Paul's son Glanmor (which means 'seaside', presumably because he likes surfing). Glan-

view of the narrator and that of the author.

Lewis the company spy is given the summation: 'One language, one industry, one religion and no dissenters. . . . Three generations of slate craftsmen had created an obedient society. No civilisation can afford to lose their example, but that is exactly what happened. . . . Two millennia in the making and two years to destroy.'

Response

The most obvious response to this is that if they were so obedient then why did it take so much police and military intervention — even inside the logic of this 'imaginary' world — to destroy the 'white-gloved society'. But what relationship has the fictive world of this novel to the history of the working-class communities it describes, and what values that the fiction claims are realised within it?

Firstly, the novelistic world is that of geographic space owned by one company boss, and governed internally by a group of elite stone craftsmen and the radical fundamentalist clergy.

Historically inaccurate. The major quarry complexes, the Penrhyn and Dinorwic enterprises, were run by two separate fiefdoms, equally vicious. Others in the region were run by workers' collectives that came out of various strike movements and lock-outs.

The one religion is again a gross simplification. There were the Nonconformist chapels, but also disestablished Welsh Anglicans, freethinkers, socialists, Stalinist communists, in fact a very similar profile to the British coalfields of the period.

One union, yes: born, like its South Wales equivalent, the South Wales Federation of Miners, out of the revolutionary syndicalist wave that swept

'Such is the nature of this novel. Fictions embroidered by half truths . . . It is a work of mendacity'

attempted to force new contracts, and a lockout ensues after the workers evict the new contract managers from the quarry.

Lewis becomes embroiled in the dispute both as an informer working to his original contract and as an adopted member of the community, living in the household of one of the strike leaders, Paul Gravano.

The Gravano family are also 'outsiders', Sardinian immigrants who have cohabited with the native Welsh for two generations.

Lewis, a homosexual, falls under the spell of the charismatic self-taught Paul and, thwarted from his desires in the 'puritan' culture, works out his sexual frustrations on the sister Leah, a village pariah because of her illegitimate child and her

mor uses his father's oratorical and charismatic skills in the service of that other great entrepreneur who has changed the cultural landscape of North Wales, Billy Butlin.

After they witness the death of Paul from apoplexy after Glanmor's coming-out, and his discovery that Lewis was a company spy, they leave for the freedom of California, first paying a visit to Leah, who has become a jazz singer in Liverpool 8!

This abstract of the narrative may appear dismissive, and crude. Let me warn any reader who may think that the literary formula of the secret agent or agent provocateur (used by Conrad and Dostoevsky) invites naive readers to a simple partisan response, that in this case there is little or no

to the 1905 Russian Revolution. It was not just an industrial but also a social movement.

But more pertinent to the claims of this novel is the 'freeing' of sexual relations ostensibly derived from the breaking of the strike and the release of the women from the patriarchal grip of the male craft and 'homoeoteric' elite.

Women do not do very well out of the novel's central figure. Leah is a pincushion for Lewis's thwarted homosexual desire for her brother.

The young women on the demonstrations are described as emaciated and 'obedient'. Leah liberates herself by discovering a talent as a jazz singer in Liverpool, which is not dominated by male voice choirs.

The young men in the 1950s are dealt with even more contemptuously. Merseyside apprentices and young working-class boys are cynically exploited sexually and humiliated by Lewis and Glanmor.

Complex

Sexual 'puritanism' and temperance are complex issues in these communities. They are oppressive, a source of hypocrisy and the worst forms of sublimation. But they are also an imposed form of class discipline that protects women and children who could starve or fall prey to the many diseases that could run rampant through those communities.

Although excluded from production in these mono-industrial cultures, the women had their own cultural institutions, choral societies, and so on.

Such is the nature of this novel. Fictions embroidered by half-truths and fantasy parading as a form of historical authenticity. This is what makes it attractive to elements like Campbell whose political school was that of a lie-machine. It is a work of mendacity.

Break with Tories on Bosnia!

BRITISH and French governments are making renewed efforts to appease Serb nationalism and present warmonger President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia as a peacemaker, even as Serb shells rain on Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo.

These moves, and 'inspired' press stories, are designed to forestall the Bosnian people's fightback, after Croatia regained important territory from the Serbs.

There is evidence of an international conspiracy to conceal Milosevic's responsibility for war crimes in Bosnia.

In a week that saw 15 people killed and dozens wounded in Sarajevo, diplomats claimed on 19 May that agreement was closer, and only being held up by haggling over sanctions.

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said that if fighting intensified there would be no point in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) staying in Bosnia, and NATO commanders discussed plans to pull them out.

UNPROFOR's job has been to cover the dirty diplomacy of Tories like Hurd, and of Lord Owen, whose 'peace' plans to carve up Bosnia gave the green light for war and 'ethnic cleansing'. The UN force has neither stopped aggression nor protected Bosnians.

As one UNPROFOR officer remarked off-record: 'We're not here to do anything, but to help the statesmen pretend that something is being done.'

At beleaguered Bosnian towns like Gorazde or in the Bihac pocket it is the Serb Chetniks who decide what food or medical supplies can go in, having helped themselves to whatever they want from UN convoys. At Sarajevo airport the UN has not even protected people travelling under its escort.

Two years after Sarajevo was declared a UN 'safe area', Sarajevo is near completing its third year under siege.

Mortars

When Serb shelling and sniping resumed this month, with 120mm mortars fired from the UN's so-called 'exclusion zone', UN commanders said they would not respond, and could not protect the city.

Last year, French officers ordered an artillery barrage to drive Bosnian government troops from high ground, preventing them from defending their own capital. No wonder Bosnia's General Delic calls the UN force 'a millstone around our necks'.

The British government,

which helped build Yugoslav (now Serb) military might, has insisted on the UN arms embargo, with Douglas Hurd's infamous remark that allowing Bosnians the means to defend themselves would only create 'a level killing field'.

It pretended Serbia's Milosevic was curbing supplies to the Chetnik forces in Bosnia and the Krajina. Lord Owen told UN observers not to pry too much into Serb transports.

Protested

When cluster-bombs — such as Britain supplied to Yugoslavia — were dropped on Bihac (a UN 'safe area') the UN protested, but didn't ask how these came into the possession, supposedly, of the Krajina Serbs.

UNPROFOR asked NATO to suspend flights over Bosnia in December after nine incidents of ground-to-air missiles fired at planes, and 15 of radar locking on them. Serb forces had installed 100 Russian-made Sam 2 and Sam 6 missile batteries.

'We have known of their existence for a long time,' said RAF Wing-Commander Timothy Hewlett, UNPROFOR's director of air operations.

Bosnian vice-President Ejub Ganic said the missile systems had not been on-line in Yugoslavia, but had recently been brought in from Russia.

So much for the UN's embargo, and pretence that Milosevic and Yeltsin are partners for peace!

When French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe went to Belgrade for talks, 'Le Figaro' reported a plan to let Serb forces take Tuzla, as well as 'enclaves' like Gorazde, and hold territory in Croatia.

Bosnian advances in the mountains north of Tuzla, and the recent Croatian operations regaining part of Western Slavonia, were setbacks to this threat.

This, along with the wish to divert attention from Serb cluster-bombs tearing into civilians in Zagreb, may explain UN officers' hasty allegation of Croat atrocities.

If the Croats can re-open the Zagreb-Belgrade highway, (and if Croatia's President Tudjman

doesn't make another deal with Milosevic), the vital northern route to Tuzla, Bosnia's working-class, mining region could be re-opened too — something UNPROFOR has always opposed.

If this has to be accomplished by military means it will not only relieve the pressure on Tuzla but reverse the whole situation, drawing a noose around Radovan Karadzic's Serb forces to the west.

Contrary to the predictions of some reactionary 'lefts' in the West, Tuzla's mixed population, of Muslims, Croats, Serbs and others, remain united, against all odds. And since many ordinary Serbs are fed up with Karadzic's bloody gang, and

want out, working-class Tuzla could yet be a beacon for all Bosnia, and former Yugoslavia.

The visit to Britain by Tuzla trade unionists and their mayor may be having a bigger effect than we knew.

Diplomacy

In a speech to the House of Commons on 9 May, Shadow Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said: 'The time may have come to reconsider the cartographic diplomacy that has marked our approach to Bosnia. . . . The Vance-Owen plan, the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and the contact group peace plan.'

'They all have in common the feature of approaching di-

plomacy on the basis of drawing lines on a map. There are dangers with that approach.

'One danger is that one can legitimise the gains made by military conquest.

'One may even provide an incentive to military aggression by having made plain where one would tolerate the line being drawn on the map.'

Cook rejected the line — peddled persistently by Tory politicians and the BBC — that Bosnian Muslims are fundamentalist, or that Bosnians are irrevocably torn by 'age-old ethnic conflict'.

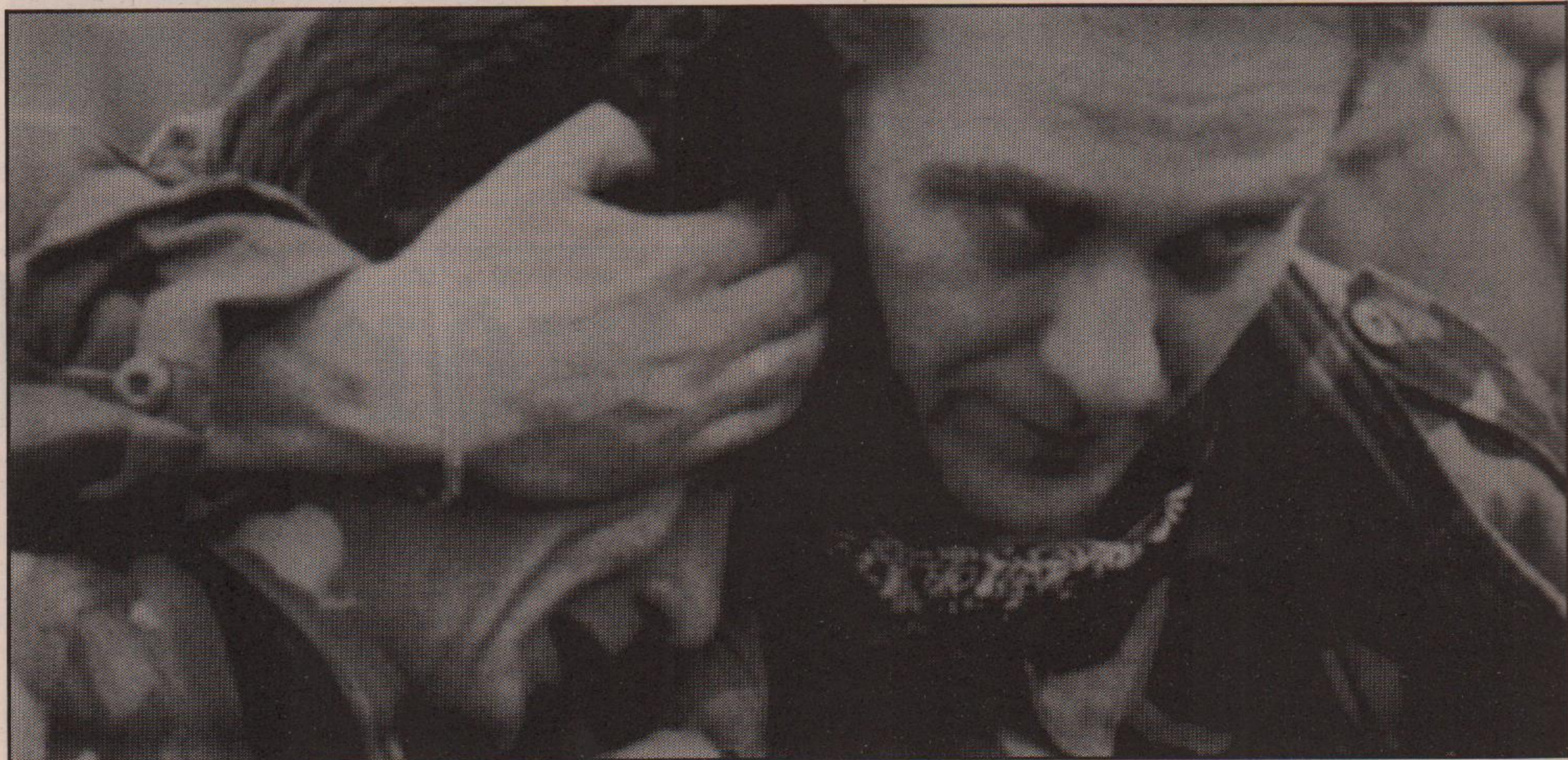
He spoke of Sarajevo's multi-cultural tradition, and called for support for the 'multi-ethnic community of Tuzla'.

Although Cook continues to rely on the United Nations, suggesting it could fund a democratic television station, for instance, we must welcome anything which budes Labour from its normal position behind Tory foreign policy.

The working-class movement must come to the aid of the Bosnian people, and tear the international initiative from the hands of imperialism, whether British, French, US or German.

Pioneered

Workers Aid for Bosnia pioneered the way. The Tuzla trade union convoy in July, for which union support is growing, is the next major step.



Bosnian soldier comforted by a friend at his brother's funeral: UN is seen as a 'millstone' around the Bosnian army's neck

US shoots into Japan's heart in trade war

BY GEOFF PILLING

THE decision of the United States to impose punitive import duties on Japanese luxury cars marks a new stage in the developing world trade war.

US trade representative Mickey Kantor has listed 13 Japanese luxury cars that will be subject to 100 per cent tariffs on their import price after the collapse of long-running talks on the car trade. The current tariff for these cars is 12 per cent.

Such popular models as the Toyota Lexus and the Nissan Infiniti will suffer in the move that will affect some £3.6 million worth of luxury cars imported from Japan. Models produced by Mazda and Mitsubishi are also on Kantor's list.

The duties were due to apply from last week, but will not be enforced until 28 June to give Tokyo one last chance to open up the Japanese market to US car exports, the issue at the heart of the dispute.

No doubt President Bill Clinton is hoping that the threat will force the Japanese to capitulate

and that a 12th-hour agreement can be struck at the Group of Seven meeting in Canada on 15 June.

'The trade imbalance has benefited Japanese manufacturers at the expense of American workers and American companies. This must end,' said Kantor after announcing the measures.

But US car distributors handling Japanese imports are not so sure. 'This bullet is going to go through many Americans before it hits the Japanese car producers,' says a Californian Lexus distributor.

Denounced

The Japanese Automobile Manufacturers Association has denounced the move as 'a blatant and irresponsible violation of international law'. The Association claimed that 'Any impartial and factual review of Japan's auto and auto parts market will show that there are no barriers and that foreign manufacturers have been rapidly increasing sales'.

Their anger has been reinforced by the slow-down in the sale

of Japanese cars in the US market as a result of the rapidly rising value of the yen against the dollar. The recession in Japan has also made even more imperative the need to boost exports.

The US move is clearly in breach of the rules of the World Trade Organisation and it seems certain that the Japanese government will challenge Clinton's move with the WTO.

Washington is trying to force the Japanese government to agree to a figure for US car exports and car parts to Japan and there is no provision for such an arrangement under WTO rules. Washington also wants Tokyo to agree to the setting up of a definite number of dealerships that would handle US car exports.

'If we agree to what they are asking for now, we would have to agree to anything they might ask for in the future,' said a trade official in Tokyo.

Many Japanese car makers are already unhappy with the plan they submitted to in 1992 which committed them to buying \$19 billion worth of US car parts in the year to March

1994 and they are determined that this plan shall not be expanded, as the US now insists.

The WTO rules were only ratified last year following the long drawn out 'Uruguay round' of trade talks. That they are so soon threatened with disruption is a sign of the fragility of world trading relations.

Lawyers

'Few, if any, independent trade lawyers doubt that the result would be a disputes panel finding that the measures as proposed . . . were illegal. Washington would then be required to rescind any punitive tariffs or face counter-retaliation by Japan,' said the 'Financial Times' in its editorial of 17 May.

That is why European luxury car makers are taking little comfort from the move against their Japanese rivals.

'There could be a short-term gain for us — but if you look at the situation world-wide, in the event of a trade war there would be no benefits for anybody,' said German car maker BMW last week.

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