

Parcel service to be given away

RED STAR RIP-OFF

RED STAR, British Rail's parcel business, has been sold to the company's management for £1, leaked documents have shown.

The Tory government will give the privatised company a £1.5 million-plus subsidy in the first year of its operation.

If the existing 700 staff choose to leave, BR will pick up the £7 million redundancy tab.

The Red Star management who have allowed a profitable £70 million business to turn into a £38 million loss-making operation is now to benefit from privatisation.

It was the introduction of an 'internal market' in 1987 that prepared the way for this give-away. Before then Red Star had used existing British Rail trains, station and staff to move parcels at speeds that road transport could not match.

But prices were rigged against Red Star, losses mounted and these are now being used as an excuse for giving the industry away — to those who were in charge of the service when the losses were incurred!

Labour transport spokesman Michael Meacher said he intends to refer the matter to the Commons Public Accounts Committee.

This is an evasion! As Meacher well knows, the Committee will meet, and may even issue a 'critical' report.

BY THE EDITOR

But in the meantime the parcels business will have been disposed of and the City sharks allowed another fat killing.

Yet Labour could halt privatisation dead in its tracks. They simply need to announce that when they take office all industries privatised will be taken back into public ownership, with no compensation paid to the shareholders.

Institutions

The City institutions would immediately refuse to buy shares in BR and other industries waiting to be privatised. And shares in the existing privatised concerns would collapse.

But there is no danger that Labour will announce any such plans. The Labour Party is tied entirely to the needs of big business and the City.

Not only will the Blair leadership not fight the Tory privatisation measures. We can expect further measures of the same sort under the next Labour government.

Support Bradford march for Bosnia

In response to the fall of the so-called UN safe areas a group was formed in Bradford of trades unionists, socialists and community activists who have called for a march and demonstration in Bradford for today, Saturday 26 August.

The Bradford Bosnia Solidarity Campaign were involved in the two recent marches to defend multi-ethnic Bosnia (see picture).

The Bradford march and demonstration starts from the Infirmary Fields at 1pm. The Bradford Bosnia Solidarity Campaign can be contacted c/o the Grosvenor Community Centre, Laburnum Street, Bradford, 01274 725046.



Bosnia paper asks for collaboration with Workers Press

JOURNALISTS on an independent Bosnian newspaper are proposing to collaborate with Workers Press to bring news and opinion from that country and also make more widely known the struggle in solidarity with Bosnia in Europe and the rest of the world.

'Bosna Est' is a paper run by a group of journalists who have had great problems in

getting their opinions into other papers. Its journalists are united in their defence of an undivided, multi-cultural Bosnia.

The paper has been produced in Tuzla for the past three years as a 20-page monthly. Its circulation runs to many thousands — remarkable given that its price is equivalent to 5 or 10 per cent of the monthly wage.

The editors now plan to launch a 40-page monthly. Independent publications are having a hard time in Bosnia. Many papers and TV stations are aligned to the ruling SDA party and in Tuzla there is widespread mistrust of this media.

Members of the recent trade union convoy to Bosnia discussed with Tuzla journalists the financial difficulties

of the independent press.

Ways are being explored of getting the National Union of Journalists and other media unions to 'adopt' a particular independent journalist.

Around £30 a month would enable one person to carry on working.

Journalists on 'Bosnia Est' can be faxed on 00 387 75 23 88 19.

Tuzla Trade Union Convoy
Report-back meeting
Tuesday 29 August, 7pm
Highfields Youth & Community Centre
96 Melbourne Road, Leicester

Non-stop picket for Bosnia
Whitehall, opposite Downing Street
Come and support us!
Join the picket: phone 0171-240 7992

Bosnia Solidarity Campaign BOSNIA FORUM

Central Hall, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH, Saturday 9 September, 10.30am-5.30pm
For information: Tel/Fax 0171-240 7992.

Trafalgar Square is booked for 24 September for another Bosnia demonstration. Get in touch for further details!

Labour leaders duck privatisation issue

TUC general secretary John Monks has demanded that rail privatisation should not go ahead without 'water-tight assurances on health and safety'.

Monks was responding to the latest leak that pointed to the fact that privatisation is threatening safety on the rails.

A memorandum from Railtrack management has attacked the competence of outside contractors to ensure the safety of rail operations.

The memo referred to an incident at Hitchin and Hertfordshire in which overhead cables were pulled down on 14 May.

The memo picked out 11 matters which needed urgent attention, such as the legal relationship between Railtrack and agencies and the 'competence in railway operational safety provided by agencies.'

This latest warning from inside BR about the consequences of privatisation came only days after a senior safety manager warned that unless safety procedures were tightened, there could be another disaster like the December 1988 Clapham rail crash in which 35 people were killed.

At least four senior BR executives who have warned about the dangers to safety have been offered early retirement or have been sidelined into other posts.

But Monks's call is fraudulent to the core. Like BR managers he knows all too well that rail privatisation is driven entirely by profit and that safety is a quite secondary matter.

A handful of people are making millions out of privatisation. They have not the least interest in the safety of those working in the industries privatised, nor in the users of the services that they provide.

What is required, and what the TUC have refused to provide, is an organised fight against this government to stop its privatisation programme.

Reformist muddleheads at work

EVEN on the basis of the government's corrupt figures the number out of work last month reached 2,315,300. The real figure is over the 3 million mark.

This was the first rise in 22 months and put the nail in the coffin of the Tory government's self-proclaimed 'economic recovery'.

There was in fact never an economic recovery. The savage devaluation of the pound after its forced departure from the European Monetary System gave British exports a temporary respite in world markets. But the chronic feebleness of British capitalism did not go away.

TUC secretary John Monks made his usual meaningless moan: the figures were 'depressing' and resulted from the government's 'deliberate encouragement of a hire-and-fire strategy by the employers'.

Monks made the ritualistic call for 'more investment' to create 'extra jobs'.

But the unemployment is not caused by Tory 'policy' as muddleheads like Monks pretend. If solving unemployment was as simple as Monks and company pretend, why have the Tories not implemented his 'recipes'?

The rise in long-term unemployment is a feature of all the major capitalist countries, Britain included. Each 'recession' brings a sharper rise in the number thrown out of work, while each 'recovery' absorbs fewer and fewer back into the labour market.

Meanwhile millions never actually enter the labour market; leaving school they never manage to find a job.

It is an expression of the fact that capitalism finds it more and more difficult to extract profits at a sufficient rate from the working class. Millions of people, especially young people, trained or not trained, are surplus to its requirements.

This is a crisis that will not go away. If Labour comes to office it will inherit this enormous social crisis.

The Labour leaders have made clear where they stand. They have rejected nationalisation, they have made clear that the interests of the bankers and monopolists will be absolutely safe in their hands.

The working class will be faced with exactly the same problems the day a Labour government comes into office as it is today. That is why it is necessary to build a movement in the working class to prepare for that day.

SIMON PIRANI's criticisms of our coverage of Bosnia, published on page 5 this week, come as a complete surprise, given that Workers Press has been exposing, week in and week out, the roles of all the agents of imperialism in the Balkans.

Indeed, last week, in the lead article to which Simon refers, we exposed that section of the Bosnian government that would settle for a Muslim statelet rather than continue the fight for a full multi-ethnic Bosnia, where Serbs, Croats, Muslims and Jews, everyone can live together in mutual respect. Looking back over previous issues of our paper, examples came flooding out of our trying to build up the 'all-round picture' that Simon says we don't have.

But, Simon says, we have not recently sufficiently warned about Tudjman's role as an agent of imperialism. We have underplayed Croatian designs in wanting a slice of a dismembered and destroyed Bosnia. We have taken assurances from the Croatian ambassador that Krajina Serbs are welcome to return to their homes in safety at face value. And what about the Croatian fascists (reported in the 'Sunday Mirror')?

Bosnians, certainly, need no warning about Tudjman's 'friendship' after Mostar. The Bosnian part of the city has been reduced to a state not dissimilar to Dresden after the blanket firebombing by the RAF and Hiroshima and Nagasaki by USAF in World War II. The Croat-nationalist part of the city is barely touched, not even by bullet holes (see Workers Press, 10 September 1994). Driving through Mostar is an emotionally devastating experience.

And I won't soon forget being ambushed and kept in a damp cell for 19 hours by Croat-nationalist forces near Caplina to obstruct the progress of a Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy (see Workers Press, 20 August 1994).

As to our ignoring the presence of Croat fascists, our 12 August editorial, in the first paragraph, said: 'Encouraged by the slaughter of innocents in former Yugoslavia, some even went to join the Croat Ustashi, or the Serb nationalist Chetniks, and get "blooded".'

Our report of the statement by the Croatian ambassador about Serbs in the Krajina region being 'welcome home' was for 'the record' and will be used by this paper in future should there be any Croatian government-orchestrated campaign against Serbs for being Serbs.

We could perhaps have attached an appropriate class 'label' to say that we don't trust this particular representative of the Croatian government. But, the whole character of Workers Press is that we don't 'trust' any bourgeois representative, and that includes Labour Party and trade union leaderships. To 'warn' about all of them every week would make for tiresome reading and the paper already costs a lot of money to distribute around the world without adding to its weight.

This week's Workers Press contains a critical comment from WRP member Simon Pirani saying that we have not sufficiently warned readers that 'Tudjman's main role is as an agent of imperialism, to help impose a settlement in which the losers are multi-ethnic Bosnia and the working class of the Balkans' (page 5). We carry here responses from Workers Press editor MIKE COOKE and WRP secretary CLIFF SLAUGHTER

A self-criticism would be, rather, that we didn't clearly enough warn about and investigate the US machinations in Bosnia, although they did not go unnoticed in Workers Press.

For too long the US state was presented in the bourgeois media as the 'friend' of Bosnia against the rest of the world. There were moves there to lift the arms embargo that would have given many Bosnians hopes that they had at last found a powerful ally. With the US carve-up plan, Clinton and Co. join the grubby crew of Owen, Vance, Stoltenberg and Bildt in the eyes of all multi-ethnic Bosnians and workers who support their fight.

But the warning that Simon mentions that was 'raised within our party, quite unambiguously, last week', was critical of Charlie Pottins when he said: 'It is the lines drawn by British and other imperialist statesmen on maps in Geneva that have proved more dangerous for Bosnia.'

Simon said, in a letter to the Workers Press editorial board: 'I think it is completely wrong to counterpose Tudjman's carve-up... to the imperialists' carve-up, as though the former was less dangerous.'

But it is only by understanding the relations between Tudjman and imperialism, the divisions in the ruling class internationally, that we can begin to chart a path forward for the working class to build its own leadership against all those forces that want to break up any organisation it has or attempts to build. I don't think that's done by mechanically issuing 'warnings'.

Mike Cooke
Workers Press editor

I ENDORSE completely Mike Cooke's vigorous defence, against Simon Pirani, of Workers Press's record in fighting the UN and US imperialist plans to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is a record which is unique and which has become widely recognised in this country and internationally.

It is my responsibility as Secretary of the WRP to add a few points, especially as the Workers Press (19 August) editorial on the political, working-class solution to the situation in ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkans was largely based on notes written by me.

It was because Simon Pirani had sent me a copy of the fax in which, as he now says, his warning of the need to emphasise the war aims of Tudjman and his offensive as part of US imperialism's plans was 'raised within our party, quite unambiguously', that I sent those notes. They reflect a discussion I was able to have on 7

August with a comrade of the Workers International in Serbia, and they explain the context in which the International now sees and acts upon the situation in Bosnia.

That is, the party did not ignore his 'warning' about Tudjman, as he now implies. If it did not occur to Simon that the editorial was a response to his message, then so be it. But let us get to the issue in dispute.

Simon Pirani says: 'The (Croat) offensive must be considered in the context that the imperialist powers are hard at work for a "settlement" to carve up Bosnia.' As Workers Press readers know, this is not exactly hot news.

Those readers also know that Charlie Pottins's full-page article in the same issue went thoroughly into the US carve-up plan, detailing Tudjman's past attack on Bosnia behind Croat nationalist Boban and explaining that whatever Tudjman's own war aims may be, there are indications that the relationship of forces means that 'the Croatian leader cannot do just as he pleases', and that there is an active opposition — just as there is strong pressure in Bosnia itself from the working class, as in Tuzla (see Bob Myers' front-page lead in the same issue) as well as divisions even within Iztbegovic's own ruling party in Bosnia, which prevent Iztbegovic from capitulating immediately and completely to the US plans.

Inadequate

Clearly, to define the 'context' as one of imperialism's carve-up plan is woefully inadequate from the standpoint of Marxism. It smacks of a sectarian propagandism rather than being a consideration of the class relations as a guide to action in the working-class movement.

I mean this. It would be easy to get the impression, from reading Simon Pirani's comment, that the US carve-up plans, and especially Tudjman's role as their instrument, form the 'context' in which the present situation must be understood, that to warn against it is the main political job for a Marxist party and its paper, and that the WRP's 'failing' in not doing so is cultivating illusions in nationalist leaders like Tudjman, illusions which are dangerous to the working class.

This we reject completely. We made it clear in last week's editorial that the real (i.e. class-struggle) context of the Croatian offensive as of every other development in the ex-Yugoslavia is not at all decided by the wishes of the imperialists or the national-bourgeois leaders. The class enemy and its agencies work for their aims — the carve-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina — in a 'context' which contains the working class in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and internationally, as well as the contradictions within the imperialist camp itself.

Our job is not merely to issue warnings about the aims of the imperialists and their agents. As we have already said, in the same issue Charlie Pottins did expose and explain very concretely the latest US plans, just as Workers

Press has consistently exposed the UN and all other 'peace plans'. But there is more. The big question is: what next for the development of the only force, the working class, which must politically resolve the crisis of ex-Yugoslavia. That is what the editorial dealt with.

After referring to the Croatian offensive, we said explicitly: 'However, it is of even greater importance to recognise that in the final analysis there are no military solutions to the crisis in the Balkans. The only solution is a political one that involves the establishment of political independence on the part of the working class — in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Serbia and in Croatia.'

We then explained that from the beginning of workers Aid 'we saw the key to the solution in the Balkans as the re-establishment of internationalism in the workers' movement... The aid convoys to Tuzla and other places were for us part of this aim: how to bring the working class in the former Yugoslavia into a common struggle with the working class of Europe as a whole.'

The support which has now built up in the trade unions and among sections of the youth for this political line, now demands that we make a further advance towards one of our original stated aims in the campaign: for a conference of workers and socialists in ex-Yugoslavia, the Balkans and internationally on the solution of the crisis of the region.

Among other points in this editorial, in relation to our characterisation of Tudjman, which concerns Simon Pirani so much, we wrote the following, which it would surely be difficult to interpret as a capitulation to the politics of bourgeois nationalism:

'And in this light the working class of the former Yugoslavia will play a decisive role. The working class of Croatia should mobilise independently of the Croatian government for solidarity with the working class of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.'

'The support of the Croatian working class for the right of Bosnian self-determination is now a decisive factor in the situation. Here was the significance of the message of support sent by trade unionists in Croatia to the 22 July meeting held in Central Hall (see Workers Press, 29 July).'

For us, this is the 'context': the struggle for the reconstruction of the international working-class movement and the decisive role to be played in this by our fight to reconstruct its leadership, the Fourth International; a struggle which must be guided by a theoretical analysis of all the forces at work, which builds on the work which has already begun, and the standpoint of which is active revolutionary practice, not propaganda warnings which read like a hangover from the time when Stalinism could force the revolutionaries into relative isolation.

In the fight for solidarity with the working class of Tuzla are gathering many of the forces that will build a new party in Britain as in the former Yugoslavia and in other countries.

* For us in the Workers Revolutionary Party, the building of such a party together with these new forces — in the last analysis they are the forces released by the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy — is today what the reconstruction of the Fourth International means.

Cliff Slaughter
WRP secretary

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From Tuzla to fight against redundancy!

BRENT public service union UNISON branch president John Tymon returned from the trade union convoy to Tuzla to find a redundancy notice on his desk!

Redundancies have been handed out to 17 out of 70 staff at AFM London to whom services were transferred from Brent housing department under government legislation.

The surveyors, valuers, engineers, architects, designers and support staff who make up AFM are angry that Brent council are giving work to other contractors and creating the conditions for the redundancies.

Rather than heed the warnings of the union, staff at AFM had believed what the council wrote to them at the time of the transfer that they would be assured of a workload to keep them fully employed for at least three years and even five years.

Staff are angry that the new and less accountable Business Units and Area Office managers to whom the council has devolved all powers have not been instructed to continue to give

work to the transferred staff who know this work best and execute the work to the highest standards.

Councillors and unions were not sent any report or warning before some of the decisions affecting the redundancies.

Among the redundancies are engineers at a time when there is a need for inspections of tower blocks with potentially lethal concrete panels weighing up to a ton and suspended at heights of up to 150 feet over busy pedestrian walkways.

Risk

Council housing is at risk of damage from the recent weather conditions, yet workers willing and able to arrest this are being made redundant.

Disgusted at being cheated, workers have responded by voting unanimously for an all-out strike ballot in defence of their jobs. Brent UNISON branch executive has already given its support and is organising the ballot.

Workers Aid for Bosnia: Music Benefit

Attila the Stockbroker and supporting bands
SATURDAY 9 September, 8pm, The Barn,
Southwick, Brighton

What Labour leaders did in the Cold War

BY COLIN PENDLETON

RELEASED Foreign Office documents have confirmed that its secret Information Research Department (IRD), operating alongside MI6, employed leading Labour Party members, writers, journalists and the BBC to combat what it called the 'communist threat to the whole of Western civilisation'.

Among those drawn into the web at the start of the Cold War were philosopher Bertrand Russell, poet Stephen Spender, and for a short while, Guy Burgess, who was moonlighting for the Soviet Union.

The IRD's main job was to plant suitable propaganda stories in the media, but it also took a hand in trade union affairs, and found Labour leaders useful in gaining influence, at home and abroad.

Denis (now Lord) **Healey**, a former student Communist Party member who had come out of the forces to become Labour Party international secretary, was particularly helpful. Healey provided the IRD with names of prominent social-democrat emigrés from eastern Europe, and helped its influence in Asia.

In June 1948 a junior officer at the IRD noted 'A meeting should be held with Mr Healey of Transport House to discuss the possibility of the British Labour Party opening direct contact with the Socialist Party and Trade Unions in Burma.' The meeting was arranged by **Christopher** (now Lord) **Mayhew**, then a junior minister at the Foreign Office.

It had been Mayhew who wrote to Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin suggesting anti-communist propaganda operations in October 1947. Mayhew stressed the need to use non-

official media, and to keep the link secret, particularly from left-wing Labourites. With Prime Minister Attlee's approval, a meeting was held with top Foreign Office mandarins to plan the campaign.

One of them was Christopher Warner, who had started the Foreign Office's 'Russia Committee' the year before. He told colleagues:

'We are under rigid instructions that it must not become general, public, knowledge that HMG are themselves conducting anti-communist propaganda. The papers prepared by IRD... have a covering slip emphasising that although they may be given to people who will be interested, they must be given quite unofficially.'

Presenting the scheme to the cabinet on 5 January 1948, Bevin said it was up to Labour, as a social-democratic government, to give a lead to all the democratic elements in Europe which were 'anti-communist and at the same time genuinely progressive and reformist, believing in freedom, planning and social justice — what one might call the "Third Force".'

Plans

Bevin didn't use the phrase 'Neither Washington nor Moscow'. When the British embassy in Washington explained plans for 'psychological warfare against communism' to US officials, they left out talk of also opposing 'unrestrained capitalism', intended for Labourites' consumption.

The IRD employed about 300 staff putting out its material. In his 1987 book 'Time to Explain', Mayhew says: 'at home, our service was offered to and accepted by, large numbers of selected MPs, journalists, trade union

INLA prisoners on hunger strike for fair treatment

BY JOHN STEELE

THREE Irish political prisoners are on a continuing hunger-strike in Portlaoise prison in the south of Ireland.

They are all members of the Irish National Liberation Army, (INLA) and are demanding parity of treatment with IRA prisoners regarding compassionate parole.

Michael McCartney has been refusing food since 7 August and was joined six days later by Tony McNeill and Paddy Wall.

Another prisoner, Jim Gorman, came off the hunger-strike after six days. He was pressurised by the prison medical staff after being in severe pain from a peptic ulcer.

Since the IRA ceasefire at the end of August 1994, the Dublin government has given early release to IRA prisoners and treated their requests for parole more favourably.

This is in line with their attempts to bolster the Adams leadership of Sinn Fein and perpetuate the illusion that there is something in the so-called 'peace

process' for republicans. Although INLA activities have been negligible for some time it has not officially declared a ceasefire.

The INLA prisoners say that they are regularly denied compassionate parole regardless of the circumstances, while the IRA prisoners are released 'if their granny has the flu.'

There has been a virtual black-out on news of the hunger-strike by the media in Ireland. A few paragraphs have appeared in the press but Tony Gregory, an Independent member of the Irish parliament, has claimed that the state television service, RTE, had refused to cover the protest.

'Balance'

Gregory called on RTE to show 'some semblance of balance' in its coverage of jail protests by republican prisoners in Ireland and Britain.

RTE's refusal to make any reference to the hunger strike of INLA prisoners in Portlaoise prison is in sharp contrast to RTE's prime coverage of similar protests by INLA and other republican prisoners in English jails.

Indeed RTE's approach is strikingly similar to the Irish government sending a Labour Party delegation to English jails while refusing access to myself to visit protesting prisoners in Portlaoise, he said.

The Irish Labour Party and Democratic Left (the former Workers Party) are members of the Irish coalition government along with the right-wing Fine Gael.

Gino Gallagher of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the INLA's political wing, claims that coverage of the hunger strike was non-existent and accused RTE of bias against his party.

This censorship by the Irish media will not surprise activists in the Irish republican and workers' movements.

But many people, in Britain

and Ireland, who have campaigned on behalf of all Irish political prisoners will be surprised by the total absence of any news or information on the Portlaoise protest by the Sinn Fein weekly paper, 'An Phoblacht'.

Pleading

It is clear that the Sinn Fein leadership is too busy pleading to be included in 'all-party' talks with the Tories and trying to form an alliance with sections of Ulster Unionism to worry about dissident prisoners.

Supporters of Saoirse, the campaign in Britain for the release of Irish political prisoners, must demand that it also campaigns for equal treatment of INLA prisoners in the south of Ireland.

Letters

Gorazde: Europe/UNs final betrayal

A FEW weeks ago, European Union spokesperson Karl Bildt went to the Russian and Serb leaderships and negotiated away the so-called 'safe havens' in Bosnia. Two of these, Srebrenica and Zepa, fell.

The result: tens of thousands driven from their homes, thousands raped and mutilated, and all males they could find from 12 to 60 years of age murdered and dumped into mass graves. At least 7,000 people are missing.

Even before this, Mladic, Milosevic and Karadzic had been shown to be war criminals by the last four years' events.

Feeling safe because of the UN's dithering, and given the green light by Bildt, the Chetniks concentrated their fire on Bihac.

Thankfully, the rebuilding of the Croatian army over the past three years has created the most powerful force in the Balkans. The apparently invincible Serbs fell like nine-pins.

The Croatian and Bosnian armies are now better equipped. The great morale boost from the recent victories has brought disintegration to the Greater Serb nationalists, darlings of both East and West.

No one likes to see people divided and at odds with each other. But the fact of the matter is that what is happening in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia is the direct responsibility of the UN, the EU, impotent NATO and the butchers of Chechnya, the Russians.

These bodies have been quite

open in their belief in a Greater Serbia to control the other peoples of what was Yugoslavia.

Bildt in a fit of pique at having revealed himself as an abettor of mass murder, pillage and rape and belonging to the dustbin of history — in consultation with the top brass in the UN/NATO forces and his political masters in Brussels — has decided to abandon Gorazde to the forces of evil Serb nationalism.

On Friday 18 August, the UN gave notice that Gorazde was to be left with no worthwhile force to defend the Bosnian people living there.

This blatant act of betrayal will not be forgotten, and someday Bildt will be brought to justice, preferably in a peoples' court, with only one sentence — being hung, drawn and quartered with no right of appeal.

BMD
Bosnia picket, Whitehall
opposite Downing Street

More on Trepca

FURTHER to my letter (12 August) on Trepca: before World War II, the lead and zinc mines were under British ownership and developed by British capital. Rebecca West, when she was writing 'Black Lamb and Grey Falcon' (1942), met the mines manager, known to one and all as 'Gospodin Mac'.

A further reason for Dennis Skinner to remember the Trepca miners. Before the war, they were under British capitalist exploitation. Now they are under Chetnik oppression.

Tom Carter
Somerton, Somerset

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**Inside
left**

Gutter snipes

WHEN Workers Aid for Bosnia was launched, the phoney Communist Party of Great Britain's paper dismissed it as a 'reactionary stunt', and confidently predicted no aid convoy would reach Tuzla.

Ten convoys later, they're hostile ever. Accusing us of a 'paranoid' conspiracy-theory for referring to Serbia's Great Power allies, *Weekly Worker* (10 August) talks about 'the CP's rapid descent into the gutter', taking sides.

According to Phil Kent (3 August): Frederick Engels described the Southern Slavs as "non-historic peoples", by which he meant their existence was guaranteed only by acting as hired butchers for this or that imperialist power'.

Ignoring a century of working-class struggle, anti-fascist resistance, and cultural progress, and the development of Marxist theory, this misuses Engels to excuse Tory-style racism: 'you can't do anything, it's the Balkans'. At least we're not in that gutter.

Chat line

SOMEONE in America tried barring Marx and Engels from the internet. Now members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have had their wrists slapped for chatting via computer to comrades in other countries.

The SWP central committee says it wasn't consulted by the people who set up 'IS-list'. It claims messages contain 'trivialities and gossip'. 'Many of the keenest participants are inactive members of their groups,' it asserts, 'some are involved in oppositional actions'.

Trying to sound democratic, the SWP leaders say 'internet users are, in general, concentrated in universities and in upper-echelon white-collar jobs', so that 'most comrades are excluded'. Maybe they should ration members' reading, and ban anyone with more than one language?

'The IS-tendency is not an international organisation but a current composed of independent organisations who share the same politics,' they explain. 'We therefore lack the means to make the list accountable to the organisations making up the tendency.' But they know who is active in each group, and who is involved in oppositional factions!

'It is clear that some comrades, particularly in other countries, have exaggerated political expectations of the internet,' the statement declares, 'they do not understand that building our organisations depends above all on the face-to-face discussion involved in selling the paper and recruiting new members.'

While banning SWP members from participating in IS-list, they are currently discussing arrangements which will allow our sister papers to get quick access to *Socialist Worker* on the internet'.

That should cure their exaggerated political expectations.

Expressing concern about 'security', the SWP central committee rebukes a member making 'irresponsible use of a comrade's name on e-mail'. It hasn't banned e-mail, nor simply told members to be careful with names and addresses. But on the IS-List, although each member must be proposed by an existing member, there is 'no mechanism for removing people'.

'Hostile left organisations can therefore easily penetrate the list and take part in discussions that do not concern them.' Oh, that kind of 'security'? Having tried to take part in a discussion that did concern me at the SWP's 'Marxism '95' school, I appreciate their logic. The SWP central committee's statement hasn't appeared in *Socialist Worker*, but in the Communist Party of Great Britain's *Weekly Worker*.
Charlie Perkins

Ken Loach interview

UNDERSTANDING CHANGES EVERY

'It's extraordinary . . . that someone should be so anxious to repeat the lies of 60 years ago'



Ken Loach discussing his film *Riff-Raff* a few years ago

Photo: Rex Dunn

TB: Do you see *Land and Freedom* as a landmark in your career?

KL: You can't see it in terms of other work. It's just a question of there being an important story to tell. . .

It's one of the big stories of the 20th century. You can't really understand anything that's happened unless you know about Spain. It is one of the pivotal events.

After that no one could ever think of the Communist Party as a revolutionary party again. And that changes everything. All the common perceptions about the Cold War, and all that, are changed by the Spanish story.

TB: And yet many people did go on believing in the Communist Party, for a whole generation or more. The film makes you wonder why.

KL: Well, they hijacked the Spanish story absolutely . . . with *La Pasionaria* [Dolores Ibarruri, the leading Spanish Communist Party member, who was presented as the main heroine of the struggle against Franco] and a whole mythology.

There was an article in the *Guardian* recently by Ed Vulliamy which said that during the Spanish civil war the left united to fight fascism, and now over Bosnia the left is fragmented.

It's such a stunning misunderstanding of what happened. And this is someone who's writing the leading article for the leading left-of-centre national daily. How it wasn't picked up by a sub-editor or an editor. . . The ignorance is staggering.

TB: Yet that article was at least making the analogy with Spain; and it was making the statement that history is relevant, that there are lessons to be drawn. Ed Vulliamy actually spoke at the rally in support of Bosnia in Central Hall [in London in July] which you helped to sponsor. He spoke very well about Bosnia. It is contradictory.

KL: Well, yes. But the idea that Spain was politically easy: that's what is extraordinary.

TB: Can I ask you about the article by Jeff Sawtell on *Land and Freedom* which appeared in the *Morning Star*?

KL: Again it's extraordinary . . . that someone should be so anxious to repeat the lies of 60 years ago, and to apologise for something that is beyond apology. He makes no mention that they murdered the leading members of the POUM, no mention of the people they tortured, no mention of anything that is generally accepted now as historically accurate.

I was talking to someone yesterday who had known the Smillie family. The young lad from that family was killed in Spain fighting for the POUM. He died as a consequence of the Stalinists chasing the POUM out.

Sawtell seems to have no conception that good brave people who had gone to fight fascism were chased out of Spain by the Stalinists. It is really bizarre. I suppose this is a man who would deny the Moscow Trials.

TB: The article claimed you were so permeated with 'Trotskyite' propaganda that the film is [technically and artistically] inferior to your other films, that it's sentimental, that the action sequences are unrealistic and so on. This seems to me a man unable to believe the evidence of his own eyes, but have you any response?

KL: Only humour. As a film critic, he'd be good on the gardening col-

SPAIN: 'THAT THING'

Ken Loach, director of the new movie about the Spanish revolution, 'Land and Freedom', interviewed at the Edinburgh Film Festival, by Terry Brotherstone. The Festival paid its own tribute to Loach by showing the film as its opening gala performance

umn. But in a way it validates making the film. If there are still people who can argue that, then the film's worth making. More power to Jeff Sawtell's elbow, because he really makes the point for us. Perhaps we should take him around with us.

TB: Talking about political lessons, [there were] members of the Socialist Workers' Party outside the gala last night shouting: 'Join the POUM today! Join the SWP! What's your reaction to that kind of history lesson? After all, the POUM was defeated.

KL: In so far as it is just a call to get engaged, then that's fine. If one can see it as just saying 'Be involved,' then that's good. I've a lot of respect for anybody who can stand outside anywhere selling a left paper, because it's tough; we're in a hostile climate.

We can all point to differences on this issue and that issue and that's fair enough. That's the lifeblood of political debate. But these people are committed, and mainly they're young; and they come to it with ideals and a real sense of wanting to contribute.

TB: Do you think there's any truth in the idea that the making of *Land and Freedom* depended on the collapse of Stalinism?

KL: None at all. We started talking about it in 1988-89. I think it's one of those stories that you feel you've always known. [Screenwriter] Jim [Allen] and I started talking about it a long time ago. We were commissioned to write a first draft about that time and we've worked on it intermittently ever since.

TB: But could you have got it off the ground, and released, and doing a gala opening at the Edinburgh Film Festival, if you'd been in a position to make it in the 1970s, say.

KL: I think so. I've just been quite lucky over the past few years in that I've just done three or four films that have been quite successful in Europe, so it's been easier to find finance. It's to do with that.

In a way it's a commercial decision. The collapse of Stalinism is a story that's gone on in parallel. Our capacity to make the film depends on the fact that I've been quite lucky over the past few years.

TB: Coming back to the Spain and Bosnia question, you said when we spoke before that you didn't want to make easy analogies. On the other hand you clearly feel committed to the cause of Bosnia as you do to that of the fighters for the Spanish Revolution. Can you say something more about the extent to which there are analogies?

KL: I should be asking you this. All you can do is to do some research on it, and I haven't done enough to pontificate. You just have to return to first principles.

People are defending a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, particularly those workers who have shown solidarity with other workers engaged in a strike. They just need support, they need international support.

TB: You're referring particularly to the Tuzla miners supporting the British miners in the 1984-85 strike?

KL: Yes. Anybody who is victimised

because of what race they are, or whatever, needs to be protected, by what should be international peacekeepers. And plainly they're not being protected.

One can see why. Because the West, America particularly, doesn't seem to have any strategic interests. If they had, they would steam in to defend them. But they haven't so they're going to let it roll.

It tells a lot yet again about the international order. But as to making a judgment about all the elements involved in the struggle, that's something I just haven't done enough work on.

TB: You've given very interesting interviews recently to Melvyn Bragg and Jeremy Isaacs, when the question of the censorship of your work came up. What were your feelings about those interviews and whether these matters have been resolved satisfactorily? Because your film about the role of the trade union leadership really was censored, wasn't it?

KL: Things are not resolved at all. There's a big distinction in television between current affairs and fiction. You can get away with things in fiction, because (a) it's seen as entertainment and (b) the career ladder in television comes up through current affairs.

They are very politically astute, very sensitive. They know how to interpret the signals that come from Westminster. They understand the ritual dance that takes place. Consequently, they are very adept at knowing who to get to commission programmes and how events are interpreted, and what the point of balance is.

For a long time the point of balance has been moving to the right, first under the impact of Thatcherism and then under the impact of Labour's move to the right in response to Thatcher.

Consequently, the point of balance between two supposedly opposing points of view has swung to the right. If you do a programme that says, 'We have to balance this with a whole other perspective', then that's seen as out of order. That's what happened to us. That's built in to the way television is controlled.

TB: Did you see any significance in the fact that after you had those arguments, mainly about showing *Questions of Leadership*, that these leftist liberals wished to interview you? Was it something you sought?

KL: I didn't seek it. Melvyn [Bragg]'s a friend I've known for a long time, and the problem with him was the film about the miners, *Whose Side Are You on?* That was commissioned by the South Bank Show and then they wouldn't show it because they said it was 'too political'. The man who came in for the crucial discussions was a... what shall I call him... a television bureaucrat, who subsequently went to the BBC and made a lot of money.

It came down to this. If we would cut the scenes of the police beating the miners up then they would show it. That would have somehow made it artistic enough. The dishonesty is so blatant, so transparent. Eventually Melvyn did a deal with Channel Four and it was shown there.

But *Questions of Leadership* which followed *A Question of Leadership*, which was about the trade

unions' response to the Thatcher onslaught... that was a carve-up between the ITV regulating body at the time, the IBA, and Channel Four.

[Most of the people involved were] Labour right-wingers, SDP sympathisers. The key figure at Central [TV] at that time was Robert Maxwell. The carve-up was all being done by those people, with that political orientation. Of course, it's all hidden, but that is really where the power is.

In broadcasting, the right is totally in the ascendant. It's how they discuss issues. It's the people they choose to speak. The language they use. The questions they put. Listen to the morning Today programme on the radio. With every issue you can see where they put their point of balance....

TB: You spoke at the gala about the Labour Party's lack of principle. Workers Press, for some time now, has been calling for a wide discussion about creating a new party. Following the collapse of Stalinism and the discrediting of the Communist Party, and then the abolition of Clause IV particularly, it has argued that now is the time to start the discussion. Have you any thoughts about this?

KL: It is very complex, and again I think I have to listen to the arguments before pontificating. The argument for staying involved with the Labour Party is the direct relationship with the trade unions.

However corrupt the leadership of the trade unions is, and however politically corrupt the leadership of the Labour Party is, there is nevertheless an organisational link with workers at the point of work.

Whether the argument takes place within the Labour Party or not, one can argue either way.

The argument for a new party has been going on for as long as I can remember. I've always found it a very difficult one. It's the old phrase: 'Support the Labour Party as the rope supports a hanged man.'

TB: The [phrase is] 'Labour leaders', I think....

KL: I'll be really interested to listen to the arguments.

TB: What about the future in film-making terms? I know you're making *Carla's Story* about Nicaragua. Is that going to be a development in the Loach agenda?

KL: You don't see it in terms of a development. You see it in terms of a good story to tell, a good writer to work with. Paul Laverty, who's written it, was in Nicaragua for two and a half years....

It would be terribly pompous for me to start thinking about my *oeuvre*. I really don't think about it that way.

TB: A great strength of your work is how it links into, and relates to, real experience. Are you ever tempted to make a film about the experience of a working-class victory?

KL: Yes, very much so. I'm working on another script with Paul which is about a little victory in North America. And the fact of the collectives, and the co-operatives in Spain.... Although by the time you got to the end of 1937 they certainly didn't represent a victory, the fact that they happened makes you feel very positive about them.

Comment

by SIMON PIRANI

Tudjman's game

THE Croatian offensive was deemed positive by the editorial in last week's Workers Press for two reasons. First, it 'created a more favourable military situation for the fight of Bosnia and Karadzic's forces.' Second, it may encourage opposition to Milosevic in Serbia. I would add a third: it ended the Serbian occupation of parts of Croatia.

But all these three points still add up to less than half the story.

The offensive must be considered in context: that the imperialist powers are hard at work for a 'settlement' to carve up Bosnia.

Is the Croatian regime trying to bring closer such a carve-up — which would be a serious setback for the working class? Yes it is.

Is Tudjman helping or hindering the fight, reported by Bob Myers in last week's Workers Press, to regain a multi-cultural Bosnia? He is hindering it.

'Are Bosnia's Muslims, buoyed by the Croatian offensive last week, going to find themselves this week victims of a carve-up, as Croatia and Serbia fulfil a longstanding dream of splitting Bosnia between them?', wondered a liberal opponent of Milosevic to a British journalist (*Guardian*, 16 August).

The imperialist powers hope so. And the main vehicle they are using to reinforce the division of Bosnia is the Tudjman regime.

Fearing that the Bosnian government may block the plan, America is taking drastic steps to bring its friends [i.e., Izetbegovic and the majority of his government] to heel. It is doing this by working through Croatia, another friend, reports the *Economist* (19 August).

The US, having sponsored a military agreement between Croatia and Bosnia, is now 'putting pressure on Mr Tudjman to freeze the military accord', reports the *Economist*... in order to force the Bosnian government to accept its plan.

In this context, the Croatian offensive can be seen not as a means to achieve a multi-cultural, undivided Bosnia, but as a means to hasten the division of Bosnia.

As the Balkan News Agency pointed out in the east European weekly, *New Europe*: 'If Croatia was really on the side of the Bosnian government, it would not uproot the Krajina Serbs and their army and push them, armed, into Bosnia, where they are a valuable reinforcement for the thin front lines of the Bosnian Serb army.' Good point.

The Workers International should warn clearly that Tudjman's main role is as an agent of imperialism, to help impose a settlement in which the losers are multi-ethnic Bosnia and the working class of the Balkans.

This seems to me an essential starting point for the fight to develop the political independence of the working class, to which the editorial refers.

It is a failing that — despite this matter being raised within our party, quite unambiguously, last week — Workers Press did not come forward with such a warning about Tudjman's policy.

The Croat-Bosnia federation and the US plan

In this connection, may I also comment on last week's Workers Press report of the response to the US plan by the Croatian and Bosnian governments.

The Bosnian and Croatian ambassadors in London 'held a joint press conference, rejecting media speculation about a rift', reports Charlie Portins. He adds that 'British media commentators have suggested Croatia's victory in Krajina could renew designs on Bosnia.'

Well, I, too — not as a 'British media commentator', but as a militant of the workers' movement and member of the Workers Revolutionary Party — suggest that Croatia's victory could renew its designs on Bosnia.

I would go further and point to the Croatia-Bosnia federation as a 'Trojan Horse' for the division of Bosnia.

I think the bourgeois *Economist* magazine had it about right when it speculated: 'Mr Tudjman can probably have his cake and eat it: he can win western plaudits for backing the Bosnian federation, knowing that despite its nominal independence and multi-ethnic constitution, it is likely to consist of little more than Muslim statelet and a Croat statelet to be dependent on Croatia itself' (*Economist*, 12 August).

The heroic workers of Tuzla, fighting to defend their multi-ethnic society, will do so not only against Karadzic and his bandits but also against Tudjman — who could yet help to divide Bosnia at the very point of Karadzic's greatest weakness.

The Krajina Serbs

My final comment concerns Workers Press's reports of the flight of the Krajina Serbs.

I strongly agree with Charlie Portins's attack on Michael Portillo, for his 'gall' in putting the Croatian action against Knin on a par with the Bosnian Serb fascists' genocidal onslaught on Srebrenica and Zepa.

But I was disappointed to see that, instead of trying to build up an all-round picture of the Krajina situation, last week's Workers Press reported without comment the Croatian ambassador's claim that the Serbs who fled are 'welcome to return home'.

Come on, comrades. Even I, with far less day-to-day contact with Bosnia than many, can see reasons for taking his excellency's words — like those of other imperialist-backed right-wing regimes — with a pinch of salt.

There clearly is evidence that Serb nationalists in Krajina helped to engineer panic and encourage a large-scale exodus. But there is also evidence that this exodus suited the Croatian government and the United Nations just fine — not least because it got a lot of armed Bosnian Serbs out of a position from which they could attack Croatia, and into a position from which they could attack Bosnia.

As for the civilian refugees from the Krajina, we are surely not taking his excellency's word for it that attacks on them are not being 'orchestrated'.

There is bloody chaos in that part of Croatia, over which he has no more control than I do. At work in that chaos are not only the Croatian government forces but Croatian fascist gangs.

As well as reporting the ambassador's speeches, we should find out more about the strength of these fascists and their relationship with the state. The *Sunday Mirror* claimed last week that the Croatian fascists organise weekend tours for fascists from other European countries to go and snipe at Serb civilians.

All these forces make up part of the picture. In order to develop the political independence of the working class, we need to assess their relations objectively.

Cock-up or conspiracy?

IN 1952, Scottish readers of the *Daily Worker* were informed in a large front-page headline that the Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson, Governor of Illinois, had won the US presidential election.

Not until 24 hours later did they learn that this was an unfortunate mistake, and that the new president was in fact the Republican candidate, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had romped home with 55.1 per cent of the vote and a majority of more than 6 million votes over his opponent.

How did this happen?

In order to catch the train from Kings Cross that would get the paper to Scotland in time for distribution on the following day, the *Worker's* first edition had always to be printed around six o'clock in the evening.

The result of the US presidential election was not expected until well after that hour. Rather than disappoint Scottish readers, it was decided to gamble on what seemed to many — including the paper's foreign editor, Derek Kartun — a reasonable certainty.

Many observers across the Atlantic were predicting a Democratic victory, if not a Democratic landslide; and Kartun was no doubt fortified in a perilously risky decision by consultations with the staff of the *New York Daily Worker*.

Faces were beetroot-red — and not only Kartun's face, but also that of J.R. Campbell, the editor, who had a lot of explaining to do to the Stalinist leaders at King Street as well as to his own mystified Scottish readers.

All our faces, in fact, were red that day, and that includes those of us who had played no part in the decision but even so had to endure the mirthful gibes of other journalists. Who said dog doesn't eat dog?

I WAS put in mind of this 42-year-old humiliation by the recent — and, I think, much deeper — humiliation suffered by the London *Evening Standard* over the Bryan Gould fax affair.

As is now well known, the *Standard* ran an article under Gould's name attacking Tony Blair's leadership of what I suppose we had all better get used to calling Newlabour.

It turned out that the article was in fact written by the 19-year-old son of the home secretary, who had submitted his effort on spec, and by fax, to a number of newspapers.

At the *Standard*, so the story goes, there was a monumental mix-up of two faxes that arrived within minutes of each other — 'an extraordinary mischance', according to its editor Stewart Steven.

But was it really just a cock-up? If so, there are several questions that are crying out for an answer.

First of all, did nobody in the *Standard* office — a sub-editor, say, or a proof-reader, or the lawyer who is supposed to read everything for possible libel — did nobody actually read the piece that was printed over Gould's name?

For how was it possible to read it and not notice the clues it contained to the writer's youthfulness? And what heedless, hapless sub-editor stifled incipient doubt, if any there was, by putting up a strapline according to which Gould was imagining himself as a first-time voter?

And second, and not least, how was it that the Tory chairman, Brian Mawhinney, pointedly refrained from mentioning this article in his barnstorming whistlestop tour of Britain?

Rumours abound. There are those who say Mawhinney was tipped off by someone in the know that, while the byline was Gould's, the words were those of 38-year-old Nick Howard, hence *Standard*.

Editor Steven has dismissed

PERSONAL COLUMN

such suggestions. He would, wouldn't he?

Was it just a cock-up? Well, someone was insisting to me the other day that for every conspiracy there are at least ten cock-ups.

But over this particular episode there hangs a decidedly fishy smell. And it's the pong, if I'm any judge, of somebody's dirty tricks department.

Brazil comes to Britain

READERS living in or near London or Manchester will have a chance in three months' time to hear a virtuoso playing the *berimbau*, the Brazilian single-string musical bow that I mentioned here a couple of weeks ago ('Ignorant critic', 12 August).

And they will be able to enjoy the unique combination of dance, game, and martial art with which this increasingly renowned instrument is associated.

The Second Festival of Brazilian Music and Dance is to be held in London on Saturday, 25 November 1995, and in Manchester on the following day. The Festival's aim is to present the work of Brazilian musicians and dancers resident in Europe, in four areas:

1) *Capoeira*. This near-relative of the kalinda stick-fighting dance of Trinidad is performed by two dancers to the sound of the *berimbau* as well as drums, tambourines, song, and handclapping.

Capoeira has long been a central element in Brazil's traditional culture, and was a familiar sight in both Bahia and Rio de Janeiro early in the 19th century. Now widely known outside Brazil, it has been a seminal influence in the emergence of break-dance in the USA.

2) *Maculele*. This is a dance portraying the legend of a brave young boy who, though averse to war and armed only with two wooden staffs, single-handedly defends his village against an attack by over 50 warriors armed with metal knives.

At the point of death, he is saved by the intervention of Ogum, Yoruba deity of war and iron, who gives him two iron knives with which he defeats his enemies and saves his village.

3) *Samba Reggae*. This free dance style is a new development in Brazil's constantly evolving dance scene, and was pioneered by the Afro-Brazilian groups *Ile Aiyé*, *Araketu*, *Olodum*, and *Muzenza*. Though firmly rooted in traditional samba, it uses also African and reggae rhythms to create a powerful and energetic style.

4) *Pagode*. This too is essentially an offshoot from the samba tradition, but in the direction of intimacy and spontaneity — a reaction, perhaps, against the latter-day commercialisation of samba.

Pagode groups rely, not on massive amplification, but on drums, guitar, *cavaquinho* (the Brazilian name for what in Britain we call the ukelele), and often banjo as well.

The Festival will be under the artistic direction of José Maria Cardoso da Costa, who has twice been Brazilian Vice-Champion of *Capoeira* and has conducted international workshops on the dance in the USA, Canada, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland, as well as at the University of Manchester.

Peter Fryer

Edinburgh Festival by Terry Brotherstone

Will the earth move for you?

THE American director, Peter Sellars, spoke at the Edinburgh Festival about the continuity between Greek theatre and modern opera. His production of *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* challenged audiences to consider what he meant.

The piece — described as an 'earthquake/romance' — is by poet June Jordan and 'post-minimalist' composer John Adams. It launched the *opera* programme at the Edinburgh Festival, but was done in the smallest of the city's major theatres; with an ensemble of only eight musicians (the excellent Finnish band, *Avanti!*), who include three keyboard players and a guitarist.

Amplification, though subtle rather than ear-shattering (even the earthquake shakes the soul rather than assaulting the aural cavities), is much in evidence.

The piece consists of a cycle of 22 songs, performed with the continuity of a comic strip. The set is spare, composed mainly of large descending cards, specially commissioned from street artists, announcing the song (and scene) titles.

Through the interacting stories of seven characters we hear a tale of life on the West Coast of the US of A, in sectors where the American Dream is such a nightmare for the dispossessed — and the immigrant poor especially —

that it takes an earthquake to create the possibility of a humanising personal transformation.

At the centre of it all are issues arising from Californian state laws based on Propositions 184 ('three strikes and you're out') and 187 ('no' to undocumented immigrants').

Under the first, conviction on three minor offences (stealing two bottles of beer being one of them in this case), means life imprisonment.

Chaos

A mock safety curtain which meets the eyes of the audience during the interval, depicting the urban chaos after the Los Angeles earthquake, has scrawled on it: 'What the fuck is go'n on?' It is a good question, and one we're clearly meant to take seriously.

How can such a technically advanced civilisation let itself be so devastated by a predictable natural disaster? How can such a wealthy society generate so much poverty, misery and personal crisis? Can chaos in the established natural order create conditions for 'ordinary people' to grasp the need to take control of their own lives?

These are not new questions, of course. But Sellars and his collaborators give them a new dimension by asking them in the context of another one: is this

what modern opera should be about?

The Greeks, Sellars reminds us, used theatre — and, within the drama, song — to sustain social cohesion amongst those who were citizens (far from the whole population of course), by confronting them with the dark side of life, with things 'too awful to discuss'.

They were able to sustain their experiments with (socially limited) direct democracy, in part because theatre was used to expose and transmit a collective wisdom too profound for the individual to grasp except through art. And it was a way in which 'democracy' — or, more particularly, the otherwise unspoken concerns of the active citizenry represented by the performing artists — could address authority and seek the redress of grievances.

Elements at least of these social functions were continued in opera as it developed from Monteverdi in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, through Wagner in the 19th.

Edinburgh Festival audiences, restored to the more obviously 'operatic' scale of the Festival Theatre, were able to experience one outcome of all that through Scottish Opera's new production of Antonin Dvorak's seldom performed *The Jacobin*, first seen in Prague in 1889.

It is the story of a count's son returning home from Paris to find himself disowned by his father, who has been convinced by a grasping cousin that he has converted to Jacobinism.

In reality he is no more than an aristocratic liberal, concerned that the enslavement of the people, if unreformed, will lead to revolution at home. Through the intercession of his wife, who reminds the ageing count of his own dead spouse, and the through power of music, the son and his father are reconciled and the wicked cousin is seen off.

There is a sub-plot of plebeian love, and a comic-opera villain, in the ample shape of the local police chief. And Scottish Opera's chorus — which, by the threat of strike action just before the festival, drew attention to the fact that it is the worst paid in the land — is in fine voice as the townsfolk rehearsing a pageant.

The opera alludes to much in a Czech tradition which was under scrutiny in the late 19th century as a result of emergent national consciousness, but does so in an outward-looking way, with Dvorak drawing on his wide musical knowledge to create a work to be appreciated by the whole world. And perhaps, in its time, it went some way to meeting Sellars's criterion, by raising in a cultural form the central political question of what sort of society Czech citizens wanted.

Possibility

The composer and his librettist, Marie Cervinkova-Riegrova, reach a conservative conclusion, with the aristocratic order undisturbed. But, as in Shakespeare's plays, the possibility of authority being overthrown, especially if it closes itself off from the outside world (like the count), or becomes ludicrous and corrupt (like the police chief), has been well explored along the way.

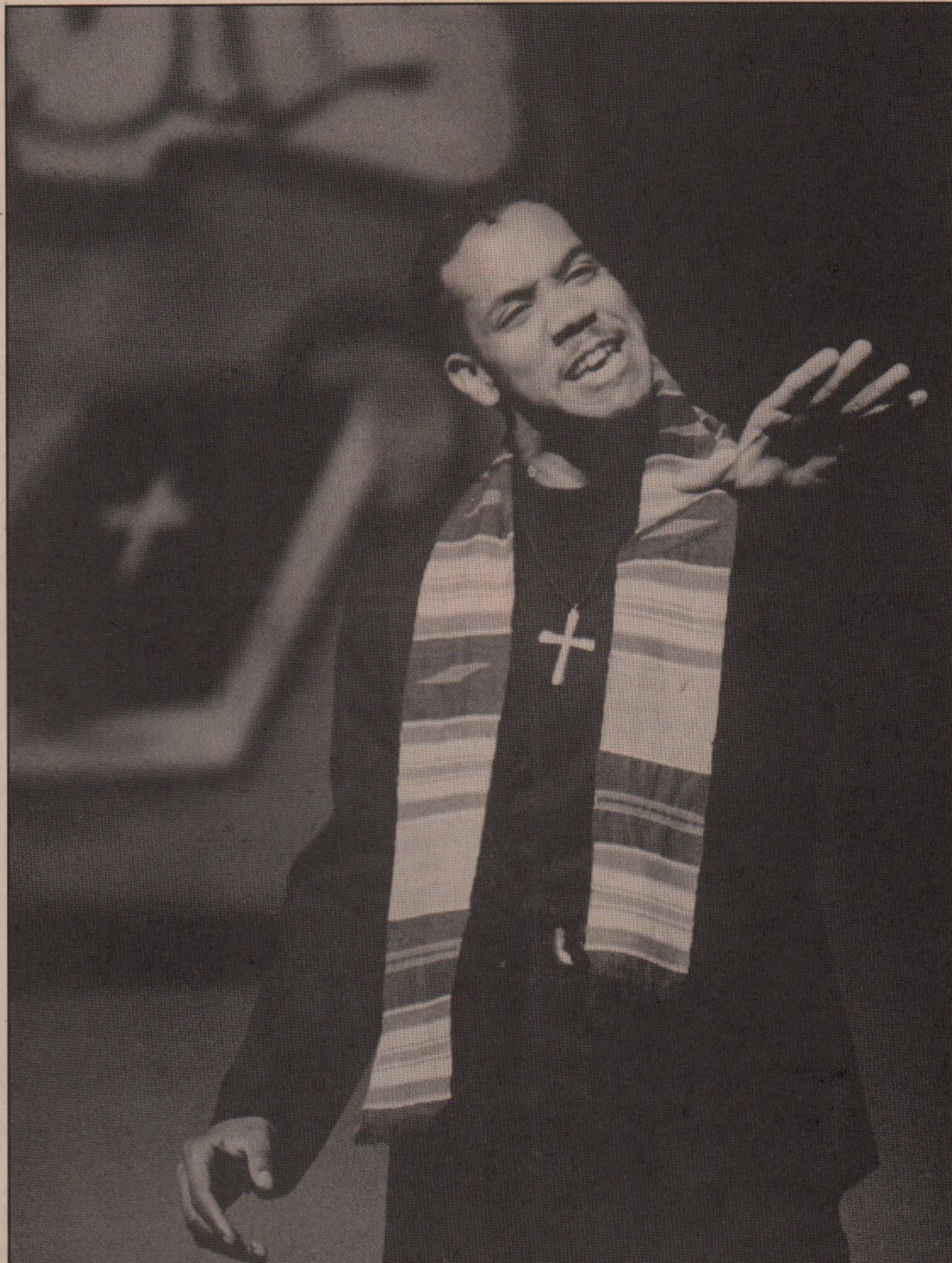
In Edinburgh, the richness of *The Jacobin* was almost (but mercifully not quite) lost in the gothic monotone of a production by Christine Mieltz, and set design by Reinhart Zimmermann, which seemed wilfully superimposed on the musical and narrative variety of the opera. It is a variety which it was Dvorak's genius to prevent from descending into eclecticism.

What unites the tradition in which Dvorak worked, and the conceptions Sellars seeks to promote, is the idea that opera must be socially engaged with the real needs of human existence.

Now, let us suppose Covent Garden had a consistent policy of mounting productions to challenge the complacency of the élite who can afford its prices; and another one of giving free seats regularly to the West End homeless whose shop doorway sleeping quarters so embarrassed former Tory housing minister, and now Secretary of State for Transport, Sir George Young, as he made his way home from the opera one night.

The ensuing musically-inspired dialogue could be most enlightening and might provide some excuse for giving the Royal Opera House all that money from the National Lottery.

Making opera accessible to all and relevant to the crisis of humanity may not seem a priority to many, but Sellars is right to insist that these things matter. We are all entitled to feel the earth move once in a while, and a night at the opera is a better way than an earthquake to make it happen.



Darius de Haas as David, an evangelically and sexually excited Baptist minister in *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* Photo: Sean Hudson

Nice weather we're having?

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

HAVE you noticed anything odd about the weather recently? The weather has been a favourite standby of polite conversation for so long that it is difficult to believe that it is becoming a topic of growing controversy and crisis.

Global warming is a phenomenon recognised by most scientists for some time as a great cause for concern. However, politicians and businessmen have argued that the case is not yet proven, despite growing public concern that 'something is happening to the weather'.

Some research findings recently reported in the science journal *Nature* have provided the strongest evidence yet of a credible relationship between emissions of greenhouse gases and global warming. But first an explanation of what the 'greenhouse effect' is.

The temperature at the surface of the earth is a product of heat generated by nuclear reactions within the earth, heat coming from the sun and the rate at which heat is radiated away from the Earth. The balance between the latter two essentially determines the surface temperature.

This balance can be influenced by a number of factors, including the content of gases and particles in the Earth's atmosphere. For instance, heavy volcanic activity in recent years has produced a marked temporary cooling effect due to material thrown up into the upper atmosphere.

The planet Venus is much hotter than the Earth partly owing to the very high carbon dioxide content of its atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a strong 'greenhouse gas', that is, it mimics the heat-retaining effect of being inside a greenhouse.

Without the greenhouse gases naturally present in the atmosphere the Earth would be 30°C cooler. Basically, the more carbon dioxide, the warmer the weather.

Since the onset of the industrial revolution the gaseous composition of the Earth's atmosphere has started to change. The carbon dioxide content has risen steadily and is now 25 per cent above pre-industrial levels. Other capitalist-made greenhouse gases on the increase include methane, nitrous oxide, and the CFCs of ozone-destroying notoriety.

Burning

Carbon dioxide increase is due largely to the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas by industrial and domestic users and also the burning down of forests for agriculture. During that geologically very short period the Earth's average temperature has increased by about 0.5°C and continues to increase.

The projections are that present rates of increase in carbon dioxide will increase the global temperature by 3°C to 4°C by the middle of the next century. During the previous 3,000 years it has never varied by more than 1°C around the average.

(Fluctuations in Britain's climate — periods of flourishing vineyards, or mini ice ages when the Thames froze over — were caused by minor fluctuations in the average temperature that can cause dramatic localised effects).

The projected future heating effect will also not be even. It will be much greater in polar regions, resulting in substantial melting of the polar ice caps.

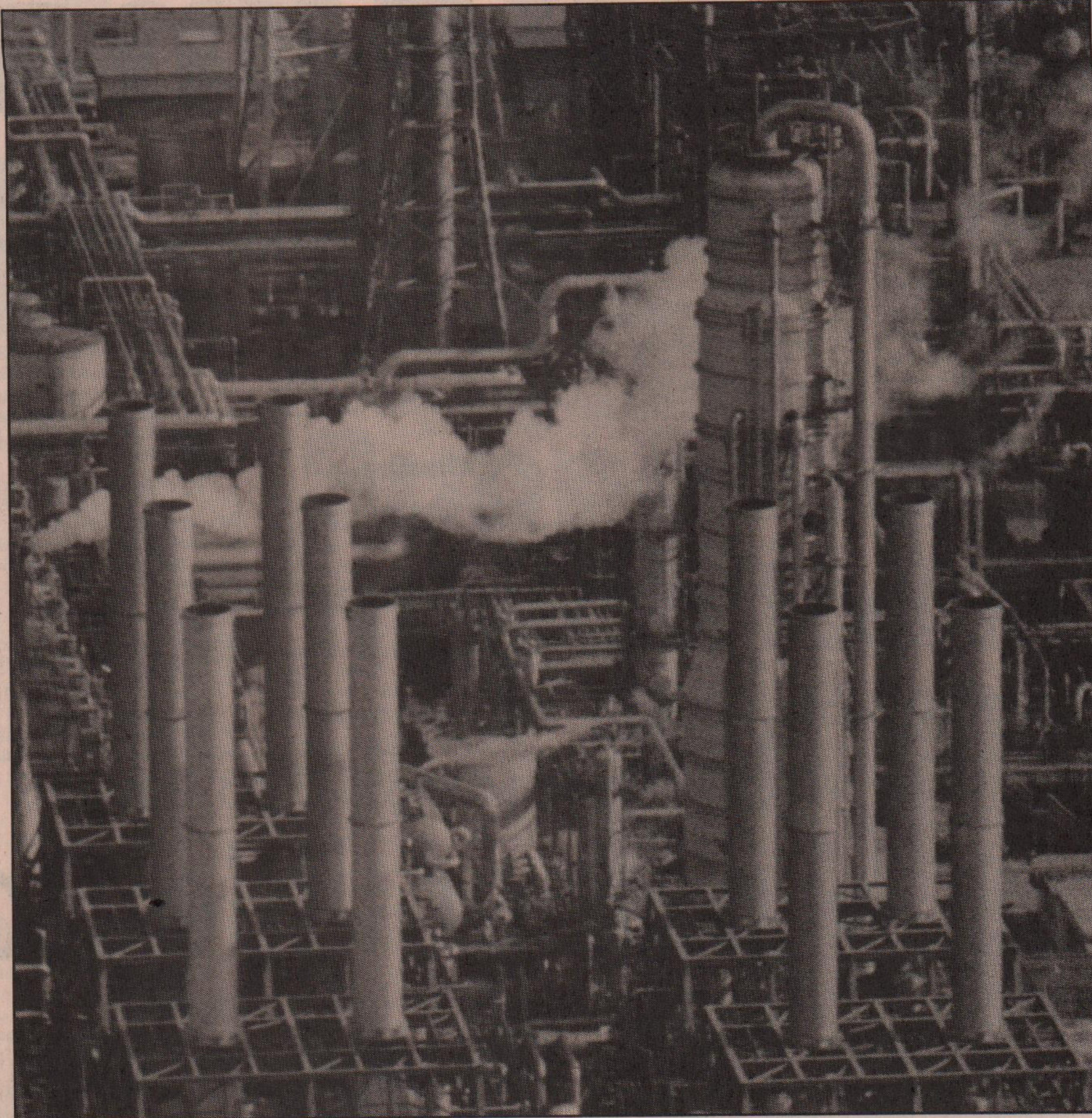
The effects of this global temperature rise are unpredictable but certainly terrible. Large areas of eastern England, Germany, Holland and the eastern USA will disappear as sea levels increase by about 8 feet, unless protected by flood barrages.

Rice-growing areas in the Middle and Far East will be devastated. Bangladesh will largely disappear; some countries, such as the Maldive Islands, will go completely.

The natural environment will change in many ways. Some species will disappear, others will flourish. We can expect to see malaria mosquitoes and other parasites and diseases in Britain as the warmer winters become less of a barrier to their survival.

There will be a severe world crisis in agriculture as crop failures spread. Grain-growing areas in Russia and the USA will suffer. Fresh-water shortages will become greatly aggravated and will be a future flashpoint for military conflicts. The spread of the Sahara will accelerate.

Large quantities of excess carbon di-



Since the industrial revolution the carbon dioxide content of the Earth's atmosphere has risen 25 per cent

oxide are locked up in the world's oceans, forests and tundras. If these are damaged and start to release their reserves of carbon dioxide a runaway effect could develop that could threaten the survival of much of the life on this planet, including humanity.

The greatest danger is that quantitative effects will lead to cataclysmic qualitative changes that are impossible to anticipate.

Nature has a way of buffering changes such as this and achieving a new state of temporary global equilibrium (the Gaia effect), but the changes occurring now are so rapid that they may overwhelm these mechanisms.

Climate changes that normally occur over tens of thousands of years are happening in a few decades.

Bizarre climate effects are inevitable, and appear to have started. The last few years has seen a series of climate records broken. Storms, freak floods, heatwaves, poor rainfall, evidence of polar ice-sheet collapse are becoming common-place. Readers will have been well aware of this summer's temperature records. These are also likely to become common-place.

Why are governments not doing more? Most countries that attended the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 are pledged to recognise the Climate Change Convention by reducing year 2000 carbon dioxide emission rates to 1990 levels.

The recession, and energy conservation measures enforced by increasing energy costs, have made this target feasible in some advanced countries. But it only slows down release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which is still at a rate that nature cannot absorb.

Greenhouse gas emissions probably need to be reduced by about 75 per cent to be safe. Developing capitalist countries will inevitably be producing much more in future. The advanced countries, which produce the great bulk of gases,

will have to reduce their emissions by a phenomenal degree.

A carbon tax has been debated, but is suspect as it would effectively be a means for unloading increased energy costs disproportionately onto the poor.

Governments have tried to argue that the greenhouse effect is not proven. This is based on the observation that temperature increases have not followed a smooth progression. There have been quantitative and qualitative changes.

Any Marxist trained in the dialectical method would have expected this, but science is still dominated by formal logic that looks for simple 'cause and effect' models. Temperatures increased erratically but inevitably upwards until about 1940, then declined until the mid-1970s. Since then there has been a marked acceleration upwards, with a recent temporary hesitation probably caused by volcanic activity.

Differences

Some scientists insist that this erratic behaviour suggests that carbon dioxide increase is not responsible for the observed temperature differences. Others claim that it may even be a positive benefit as it will increase growth rates of some crops!

The importance of the work by Mitchell and colleagues reported in *Nature* is that they have constructed a computer model that takes account not only of carbon dioxide emission increases but also sulphate aerosol level fluctuations — which reduce the greenhouse effect — and the complexity of ocean/atmosphere circulation.

This produces a time prediction of temperature changes that matches well with what has actually been observed. Projected into the future it confirms further temperature increases. This is powerful proof that politicians and businessmen cannot dismiss easily.

The reality of the failure of Western governments to take action is that the dramatic changes required to remedy the situation are well outside the capabilities of capitalism. The free market must not be interfered with, at whatever cost.

What can be done?

■ Fossil fuel use must be greatly reduced. Fossil fuel reserves are limited and will eventually run out anyway. But if they are used to depletion the effect will be catastrophic.

■ Alternative energy sources such as sun, wind and tidal power need massive research support.

■ Biomass production that uses the energy of the sun and the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to produce fuel will make a great contribution.

■ Safe nuclear energy, such as fusion energy, must be developed. At present fission energy poses problems of safety and nuclear weapons proliferation that make it unacceptable.

■ Emissions of other greenhouse gases, such as methane leaking from gas mains, or CFCs from refrigeration systems, must be prevented. The methane in leaking gas is probably doing more damage than the carbon dioxide produced when gas is burnt!

■ The destroyed temperate and rain forests of the world must be replanted.

■ Energy-wasteful agricultural practices such as over-dependency on meat production, and the lunacy of airfreighting exotic cash crop fruits around the world, must stop.

■ Public transport must largely replace private transport — a car produces 1 kilogram of carbon dioxide every 3 miles.

■ Consumer goods production must meet real human needs and recognise environmental restraints.

■ Energy efficiency must become a major factor in building design.

What are the political changes that

this will require? The growing extreme right lobby in the USA argues that there is no environmental crisis. They are demolishing environmental controls. Big business argues that the US, as the world's major energy waster, will be disproportionately burdened by measures to cut carbon dioxide emissions.

We can expect serious political conflicts to develop, even warfare, as capitalist countries try to unload the blame onto each other, whilst protecting their own economies. The environmental crisis will provide a cover for imposing authoritarian measures against desperate populations.

The green movement often produces good anti-capitalist arguments, but has no realistic political programme for changing the situation. The impressive stunts of organisations such as Greenpeace produce publicity, but fail to mobilise the mass movements that will be the only means for achieving revolutionary changes.

Many green anarchist groups are retreating into primitivist arguments which claim that destruction of the environment is an inevitable product of industrial society. They attack Marxists for believing that a solution can be achieved by transcending capitalism with a society based on technology, but organised and controlled rationally. They ally themselves with groups such as anti-roads campaigners, who are seen as the vanguard of opposition to technology.

The alienation created by capitalism is seen as a product of technology, rather than of commodity production. This leads them to call for a return to the primitive communism that existed before class societies.

Arguments

Their arguments are nonsense; there can be no return to a state of rural simplicity. The energies of people involved in campaigns against roads, destruction of nature or factory-farming must be mobilised to see these as reflections of the inhumanity of the commodity system, rather than a reason to go back to the caves!

Humanity is perfectly able to organise itself rationally. The only obstacle is the imposition of a self-destructive society that happens to serve well the needs of the cliques that control it.

Up until now capitalism has been able to protect its back with marginal concessions to the working class in advanced capitalist countries, and the destructive effect that Stalinism has had on working-class resistance.

The growing financial crisis of capitalism, the destruction of the welfare state, the death of Stalinism — these all weaken capitalism's defences.

The coming environmental crisis will affect the lives of every human being on this planet. Working people everywhere will be obliged to act at an international level.

The capitalist class itself will suffer an enormous crisis of confidence in its own power. It will reach out for irrational and authoritarian solutions to retain control.

The task of socialists in this situation is to patiently explain the manner in which the anarchy and greed of capitalism inevitably produces this situation. The environmental crisis must be clearly differentiated from the economic crisis of capitalism; there will no doubt be attempts to blame the latter on the former.

The solution is a society in which every individual can contribute to controlling the decisions that determine their lives. Industries and all the other structures in society will be owned and run by workers, consumers, communities, environmental groups and all people affected by their activities.

This will ensure that all needs — human and environmental — are met. Planning will be on a global scale, the only means by which the global nature of the environmental crisis can be tackled.

Marxists call for a further development of the productive forces once capitalism has gone — the new technologies generated will be friendly to the environment.

Biotechnology has great potential for reversing environmental damage, but this will only happen if it is harnessed in a responsible manner. Exploited by capitalism, it will just add to the problems.

The environment could be one of capitalism's greatest weaknesses because it affects every individual and requires global solutions that are easy to identify but are well outside the range of what capitalism can achieve. What do Worker's Press readers think?

Croat democrats warn Tudjman: 'Troops' actions contradict promises'

ACTIONS by some Croat troops in Krajina contradict promises made by President Franjo Tudjman's government that Serb refugees would be welcome to return to their homes there, according to democratic rights campaigners in Zagreb.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

Bogdan Denic, director of Transition to Democracy, said soldiers returning from Krajina reported seeing bodies of civilians whom they assumed had been killed by other soldiers. 'There are signs of summary executions, mostly around Knin', Denic said. 'One of the soldiers saw bodies of mostly elderly people lying in the street.' UN observers had reported finding graves in Krajina, and accused Croat troops of looting and burning Serb homes. Denic, an academic who spent several years in the American social-democrat movement before returning to his native Croatia, said:

'There's massive burning, and the police are standing by and not doing anything.' He said this contradicted Croat government claims that the Serbs were welcome to return.

'They're doing everything they can to prevent that sort of thing happening. This is a question of individual revenge, but it's also a way of ensuring there's no chance at all of people returning.'

Deserted by the Serb nationalist statelet (so corrupt its officers sold supplies to the Bosnians it was fighting in Bihac), Krajina Serbs are being used as pawns again, not just in Bosnia.

To reinforce its grip on the mainly-Albanian Kosovo province, Serbia's Milosevic regime has moved 1,500 Krajina Serbs there. This is meeting opposition, not just from Kosovans but from Serbs.

Kosovo

'If it's so good in Kosovo why didn't they tell us where we were going when we started?', a young Krajina woman shouted at Serb Red Cross officials from a train window.

President Tudjman, who for-

mally invited 'Croatian citizens of Serb nationality' to return, has denied, despite evidence, that burning and looting took place. But as thousands of Croats evicted from Serb-held areas of Bosnia stream over the border, the Croatian government is talking of the need to take over Serb homes and property, and to settle Croats driven from their homes in 1991.

Intention

Tudjman has announced his government's intention of taking away clauses in the Croatian constitution according special status to minorities over 8 per cent of the population.

Knin will lose its autonomous status, which the Serb nationalists rejected when they had their 'Serb republic of the Krajina' there. The Croat authorities have also reportedly been turning back Muslims from the Serb-held Banja Luka area.

Only a week ago, the Croat ambassador in London was pointing to the absence of recognition for the Croat minority in Serbia. There is bound to be concern among the 130,000 Serbs estimated to remain in Croatia (most of whom, unlike those in the Krajina, never supported the Serb nationalists).

We reported last year on evictions of Serbs from army housing in Zagreb, opposed by neighbours and civil rights groups ('Croat police brutality against tenants', Workers Press, 15 October 1994).

Newspapers supporting the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) have dropped hints that elections could be brought forward. Some people fear Tudjman could use euphoria over Croatia's military successes to strengthen his regime. Zvonimir Cicak pessimistically anticipates

'not just a national homogenisation but a party homogenisation as well'. Others say the period of flag-waving and rejoicing won't outlast economic and social problems and workers' militancy.

The patriotic mood could misfire if Tudjman is shown to be misusing military gains for party advantage, or trading legitimate Croatian aims in exchange for an imperialist carve-up of Bosnia.

In Bosnia last week, Croat forces began an offensive to capture the Serb-nationalist-held town of Drvar, at the western end of a highway with Jajce, the old capital which could be Bosnian troops' next stop after Donje Vakuf. More evidence was reported of Serb-nationalist atrocities in eastern Bosnia. An

American journalist reported seeing a leg sticking out of a mass grave near Srebrenica, and finding bullet holes and bloodstains in a football stadium at Bratunac where Serb general Mladic had said prisoners from Srebrenica were being held.

Gunfire

Serb people living across the river Drina had said they heard gunfire from Bratunac. Bosnian Foreign Minister Mohammed Sacirbey said last month that 1,600 prisoners had been killed there.

In the hills west of Zepa, another captured town, Serb-nationalist soldiers reportedly had orders to kill any Muslims they caught.

Details of the 'peace' plan being canvassed by US representative Richard Holbrooke, published last week in the Sarajevo paper 'Oslobodjenje', indicate that Serbia's Milosevic regime would be asked to return eastern Slavonia, which was seized from Croatia in 1991.

The so-called Breko corridor, which links Serbia with Serb-nationalist-held north-west Bosnia (thus cutting off the northern access route to Tuzla) would be widened. As well as keeping Srebrenica and Zepa in eastern Bosnia, Serb forces could take Gorazde — the US government says it is 'militarily indefensible'.

To underline their intentions, UN commanders announced that the 180 Welsh Fusiliers and 90

Ukrainian troops garrisoned at Gorazde would be withdrawn in the next few weeks, and were unlikely to be replaced. It turned out the Ukrainians had already been relieved of their weaponry by local forces who can make more use of it. Serb Chetniks celebrated by resuming shelling of the town, killing three children.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey said the Americans had tried to convince Bosnia that it should abandon Gorazde, 'but they soon learned that we won't give it up.'

'We have not any reason to abandon Gorazde. On the contrary, we must regain Srebrenica and Zepa. The Serbs should give us territory, not the other way around.'

French police 'just doing their job' to protect 'Fortress Europe'

Another little Bosniak

BY PIERRE DUPONT

EIGHT-year old Todor Bogdanovic was born in Novi Pazar, in Serbia. He died just before 4am on Sunday 21 August, on a road near Sospel, in France's Maritime Alps, of a police gunshot wound. A victim of 'Fortress Europe'.

Police from the immigration

control unit had set up a road block to stop two vehicles, a Dutch-registered Volkswagen and a Passat with Bosnian plates.

They say the cars slowed, then tried to rush them. The officer who opened fire with a pump-action shotgun said he did so in self-defence.

No policemen were injured, nor was there any sign of damage

to their vehicles.

'It was late at night, at a lonely spot,' says Philippe Marland, prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes. 'We are also in a period of tension in the struggle against terrorism. We must await the result of the inquiry, but for now, I say the police were doing their job.'

He has given Todor's family a one-month temporary permit to

stay in the area. The Bogdanovics are Gypsies, of Muslim faith. Todor was born in Serbia.

But last week, like three children in Gorazde and four in Sarajevo, eight-year old Todor was killed. And French newspapers reported 'la mort d'un enfant bosniaque' — the death of a Bosniak child. If he'd stayed home he'd be just a statistic.

Solidarity telegrams needed urgently

Defend Russian workers' leader

WORKERS' leader Vera Dimitritievna Arfanos was struck by security guards and violently removed into police custody from a threshing machine plant on 30 June. She had been discussing there how to reverse management demands which are exhausting workers and undermining their health.

The 'Rostcelmash' is one of the major concentrations of workers in the south of Russia. Vera is president of the United Free Union of workers of AO 'Rostcelmash'. After three years of hard activity, overcoming threats, attempts at sackings and other difficulties, Vera had succeeded in organising the workers of three plants where several thousand workers work.

On 30 June, the threshing plant security chief Formachov, with a group of guards arrived where Vera was discussing what to do with workers. He and his subordinates

struck Vera. She was taken to the police division of the Peirvomaishaia.

'This is evidence of the impunity with which these security bullies violate the laws and human and trade union rights,' says the union.

Liberated

Vera was eventually liberated from police custody and factory workers organised various pickets of the town hall in protest at her treatment.

Today, the factories' managements in the region are aiming for 'full production' through superexploitation of the workers, thus sharpening the contradictions with the new union.

The director general of the threshing plant, Peshkov, has ordered a working regime of extra hours which violates the

Labour Code of Russia and against which Vera was organising.

Peshkov is an old bureaucrat who in the time of Brezhnev administered the factory with an iron hand. He wants to introduce more repression when it is converted into 'private' property.

Vera is a member of the Workers International Party and its organising committee calls for her defence and for solidarity from the international workers' movement. A campaign has already been organised in support of the new union and against the repression of Vera in Russia and Ukraine.

Telegrams of support expressing energetic repudiations of the physical repression of the United Free Union president should be sent to: AO Rostcelmash, Ul. Menzhinikovo, 3440229 Rostov Na Donu, Russia.

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