

Homeless denied medical care

Workers Aid marks 25 May massacre in Tuzla

WORKERS AID members laid a wreath at the site of the 25 May massacre in Tuzla. On one of the first warm evenings of the year many young people had gathered in the town centre to meet their friends, to talk, to have a beer and to celebrate the victory of the local basketball team. This was also National Youth Day in former Yugoslavia. A single shell from a Serb-nationalist gun killed 75 people and maimed many more.

On the wall behind the wreath are memorial notices indicating that the victims were Muslims, Serbs, Croats or simple Bosnians. The shell, like millions of others that have fallen on Bosnia, was sent to destroy the right of people to live a normal life — to kill those who try to resist the fascist logic of 'ethnic purity'.



HOMELESS people desperate for health treatment to beat serious health problems are being driven back onto the streets because councils are refusing to hand over the necessary money.

Homeless people with health problems are worse off under the community care system, with some waiting months for specialist treatment, according to figures collected by St Mungo's, London's largest homeless charity.

Before the system was introduced in April 1993 charities dealing with the homeless could easily move residents in its hostels for rough sleepers to its own care homes, or to outside centres, as soon as bed space was available.

They could then receive proper treatment.

Such homes and centres cost more per bed-space to run, but before the introduction of community care in 1993 this was automatically met by the Department of Social Security.

Now the cost is borne by local authorities, which make an assessment of the needs of each applicant for higher care before deciding on whether to provide funding.

'If you're a heavy drinker and have been on the streets for years, it takes a lot of courage to make the decision to move into a hostel,' said St Mungo's Tony Trueman.

'Once there, people need to get treatment for their alcohol, drug or whatever health problem immediately, or they just disappear on to the streets,' added

BY THE EDITOR

Trueman. Since the arrival of the new system the average wait for St Mungo's residents from the initial referral by the charity to their move to a higher care project is almost six months. Some homeless people have waited almost a year.

Before the new system total waiting time was between a few days and a few weeks.

Assessment

Even those who pass the assessment tests are being refused treatment because cash-starved local authorities cannot afford the money.

The plight of the homeless is part of a growing social crisis which can only get worse. The Tories have announced that they intend further cuts in social spending to finance tax cuts to buy votes in the coming election.

But Labour leaders have exactly the same policies as the Tories. They have made clear to the bankers and industrialists that there will be no 'excessive' government spending.

Anyone hoping that the dire situation facing the homeless will be solved under a Labour government is in for a bitter disappointment.

Bangladesh garment workers' tragedy: union asks for help

NINE young workers, between 10 and 20 years old, were killed when a fire broke out in a garment factory on the eighth floor of a multi-storey building in Ibrahimapur near Dhaka in Bangladesh on 5 August. Another 50 were injured.

The factory, Lusaka Fashion Limited, had been in operation for just one week. There was no fire-fighting equipment.

Some workers employed by the same factory owner at Faa Apparels on the third floor of the building tried to take fire extinguishers up to the eighth floor, but could not get through the crowd of 500 panic-stricken workers from both factories who jammed the common stairway.

The deaths occurred in the stampede.

The Dhaka 'Express' (6 August) reports:

'The victims, most of whom were in their teens, were identi-

fied as Husna (14), Pavin (17), Shahida Begum (18), Rumana Anju (14), Anwanul Haque (14), Halima Khatoun (20), Nasiruddin (10), Sabuj (12) and Babul (14).

'Fire fighters reached the spot an hour after the incident. Inmates had doused the flame by that time. Police forces were also deployed to avert any untoward incident as hundreds of people gathered in front of the building to find their near and dear ones.

'A heart rending situation was created at the morgue when bodies of the victims were uncovered for a last-minute glimpse. Most of the relatives were crying at the top of their voices.'

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association in a statement announced that the authorities would pay Tk 50,000 (£800) compensation to the families of each of the victims

• TURN TO BACK PAGE

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Workers Press

Monks's revealing statement

THE continuing argument in the trade union movement about the minimum wage has some vital lessons for the working class movement.

■ In refusing to set a figure for a minimum wage to which a future Labour government would be committed, TUC general secretary John Monks makes the most revealing statement:

'We cannot say to the Labour government: you must do something — we are not in that kind of relationship.'

Yet the Labour Party was actually created by the trade unions at the start of the century. The unions decided that they needed political representation in parliament to defend their organisations against the legal attacks of the courts. The Labour Party came into being (1900-06) because neither the Tory party nor the Liberal Party were prepared to undertake this defence.

Now, 90 years later, the head of the official movement says openly that the trades unions have little influence on the policies of the Labour Party.

■ But this raises a further question. For the unions still pour millions into the Labour Party to finance its activities at national and local level. Yet, as Monks in effect admits, they are getting less and less in return.

This is a situation that cannot last long. The working class is increasingly denied its political voice, certainly in the old form.

Yet the separate struggles of the working class — against the run-down of the NHS, the attacks on the educational system, the destruction of welfare benefits and services, against unemployment — can only be united politically.

That is, these attacks can only be fought if the working class unites its fight as a class against the government and the state.

Here in Monks's statement is another graphic illustration of the fact that the working class is now at a historic turning point in its development.

That phase in its history when it expressed its political struggles through the Labour Party is coming to an end. A new period is opening up in which it will have to express its political interests and aspirations in new political forms.

In other words the time is approaching when the working class will have to form a new party to take forward its struggles.

'Catholic Marxism' at work

ROBERT MUGABE, president of Zimbabwe, was for many years a prominent supporter of the Chinese regime as well as being a leading member of the Catholic Church.

Indeed his backers in Peking used to refer to him approvingly as a 'Catholic Marxist' who had led the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe.

Some liberation fighter! For this 'Catholic Marxist' has now issued the most rabid call for a world-wide crusade against lesbians and gays and has instructed women members of his party to take the lead in this foul operation.

'If dogs and pigs don't do it, why must human beings? Can human beings be human beings if they do worse than pigs?', he asked in his vitriolic opening to a conference in Harare on the theme of 'human rights and justice'.

No doubt Mugabe's outburst — in line with his previous frenzied attacks against homosexuality — is connected with the deepening crisis in Zimbabwe.

Independence has brought little benefit except to the tiny elite who control the ruling party, Zanu. Twice as much money is spent on military equipment as on health — spending designed to put down any internal revolt against Mugabe's corrupt regime.

His false contention that homosexuality is a European phenomenon imported into Africa is part of a whipping up of xenophobia designed to divert attention from these ills and grievances.

But this distasteful episode surely tells us as much about Mugabe's admirers in China and elsewhere as it does about the president of Zimbabwe.

Letters

Not at all? Well, some

IN RESPONSE to my comment about Croatia in last week's Workers Press, Cliff Slaughter says 'our job is not merely to issue warnings about the aims of the imperialists and their agents'; rather, the big question is 'the establishment of the political independence of the working class'.

I agree. But my point was that, in fighting to develop that political independence of the working class, a clear estimation of Tudjman's policy is vital.

Cliff says 'the real (i.e. class struggle) context of the Croatian offensive... is not at all decided by the wishes of the imperialists or the national-bourgeois leaders', because the 'context' also contains the working class.

Of course I agree that the working class is a central factor in the Balkans. But I have doubts about Cliff's way of seeing things.

The real context is 'not at all' decided by the imperialists' or bourgeois nationalists' wishes, he says. I answer: 'Not at all? Well, some.'

I do not doubt the material impact on events of the working class. I am inspired, as we all are, by the defiant refusal of the Tuzla workers to capitulate to nationalist pressure. I am committed to Workers Aid as a means of intervening in the struggle.

But I am not convinced that

this struggle will succeed in preventing a Serb-Croat carve-up of Bosnia. And it is no disservice to those who resist that carve-up to speak our minds about the dangers. (I know Cliff, Mike Cooke and all comrades in the WRP would not disagree with that.)

The future of Bosnia will be decided in struggle! Cliff emphasises that point. But we cannot avoid the fact that, in that struggle, the working class may yet pay dearly for the legacy of Stalinism and the damage it has done to the class's consciousness and organisation.

Look at Chechnya. I myself wrote in Workers Press (4 February): 'A campaign against Yeltsin's war should be linked with efforts to support the new workers' movements... only the development of the working-class movement can stop Yeltsin and other future dictators.' I think I was right to say these things. I remain committed, actively, to them.

But anyway, although the Chechen struggle is far from over, that stage of it ended in severe defeat. We cannot say the 'wishes of the imperialists' were 'not at all' decisive. Those wishes were a very definite, terrible force, embodied in the flame-throwers with which Yeltsin's mad dogs burned women and children alive in cellars in Grozny.

Simon Pirani
London SE18

PS: Cliff's article would have

been more convincing if he had avoided polemical exaggeration. There was no need for a 'vigorous defence' of Workers Press's record from me — I was not attacking it: I was criticising some articles and agreeing with others. Neither did I suggest that anyone was 'cultivating illusions in nationalist leaderships': if I was to make such a serious criticism, I would convey it directly, not by means of an 'impression'.

Serbia not 'fascist'

YOU MAY think I am raising a matter of little or no consequence, but I object to the manner many left periodicals, including Workers Press, promiscuously fling around the word 'fascist'. It is in danger of becoming merely a term of general abuse.

Shortly before his murder, Trotsky wrote, 'Buffon once said: The style is the man. Political terminology is not only the man but the party. Terminology is one of the elements of the class struggle.'

It seems to me quite clear Serbia is not fascist. A comparison with Nazi Germany quickly proves this fact.

Hitler had, as Daniel Guerin shows in his masterpiece, 'Fascism and Big Business', the enthusiastic backing of IG Farben, Krupp and the rest. They provided him with his cash. What Serbian monopolies provide Milosevic with similar support?

On the granite foundations of big Capital, Hitler built his fascist edifice. He relied on the petty bourgeoisie, whose anger and anguish at losing their small savings in the hyper-inflation, turned them in fury against the Weimar republic.

And then there were Hitler's foot-soldiers, recruited from the long-term unemployed and the lumpen proletariat. They were provided with brand new uniforms and a little cash. Regaining their self-respect and given a purpose in life, they obeyed with enthusiasm Hitler's orders to destroy working-class organisations.

As far as I can see, none of these conditions prevail in Serbia. Milosevic may be a dictator; he is not a fascist.

Before World War II, almost

all eastern Europe was ruled by tyrants. There was General Pilsudski in Poland, Admiral Horthy in Hungary, King Carol in Rumania, and so on. Every one of them was corrupt, squalid, unpleasant.

This comes through from a book on them that I am at present reading by Antony Polonsky. It is entitled 'The Little Dictators'. Had he called his work 'The Little Fascists', Polonsky would have been wrong.

Raymond Challinor
Tyne and Wear

Forum for Bosnia

WE HOPE that readers of Workers Press will come to the Bosnia Forum, which is to agree the concrete next steps in our common campaign in defence of an integral, multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Experience on the non-stop 24-hour Bosnia picket shows that thousands of people are shocked and concerned at the complicity of the UN in the tragic events at Srebrenica and Zepa. This is a truly internationalist picket, where people from many parts of the world stand side-by-side with people from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Many of the questions asked, answered and discussed on the picket as events unfold in the war, need to be aired in a proper forum, and this event is aimed at raising our awareness of the threat of fascism/racism and of our part in the fight against it.

We are glad and proud to announce that one of the sessions will be opened by the president of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation of Trade Unions and members of a delegation of Serbian people from the Serb Civic Council in Sarajevo which supports multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina.

For further travel information and admission tickets: Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, c/o ADBH, 12 Flitcroft Street, WC2H 8DJ. Tel./fax: 0171-240 7992.

Alyoscia D'Onofrio

BOSNIA FORUM: 10.30am-5.30pm, 9 September, Central Hall, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London. Attendance cost £5 (£2 unwaged).

Workers Revolutionary Party/Workers Press MEETING
10th anniversary of the expulsion of G. Healy from the WRP
Saturday 7 October 1995, 2pm
Conway hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn Underground)
Doors open 1pm for refreshments
Admission £1 (50p concessions)

The Workers Revolutionary Party is part of the Workers International, founded in 1990 for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

This meeting is called on the 10th anniversary of the expulsion from the WRP of Gerry Healy, together with a group of his supporters. For more than 25 years Healy had been the recognised leader of the WRP and its forerunners, and for most of that time of the International Committee. His political degeneration was marked by gross abuses, and he was charged with sexual attacks and physical violence against a number of comrades. He was guilty also of political slanders. He never appeared to answer these charges.

Among those who were expelled at the same time, many defended his obscene practices, and some continued the capitulation to Stalinism and nationalism which his politics had come to represent. On the very eve of the collapse of Stalinism, he and they arrived at the conclusion that from the bureaucracy could come the forces for the political revolution in the Soviet Union.

The WRP/Workers Press began, on the basis of the lessons of the fight against Healy, to renew international links with the comrades fighting for the rebuilding of the Fourth International. The qualitative change in the relationship of class forces marked by the collapse of Stalinism means that Marxists face great new possibilities and responsibilities in the building of a new party of the Fourth International.

This meeting will discuss the lessons of Healy's expulsion for carrying on this fight.

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Irish solution no closer

BY JOHN STEELE

ONE YEAR on from the IRA's ceasefire it is clear that the ending of partition and the removal of British troops from the north of Ireland is no closer.

Instead, the emphasis of the Sinn Fein leadership on gradual change through agreement with the British government and sections of Ulster Unionism has left the Republican movement and its supporters weakened and politically confused.

The illusion that there can be a peaceful, democratic reform of the six-county state leading to the abolition of the Irish border and withdrawal of Britain has done immense damage to the consciousness of Irish workers — a damage no less severe than that inflicted by Official Sinn Fein which trod this path 25 years ago.

It was on the 31 August 1994 that the IRA called a 'complete

Justice demanded for Donna O'Dwyer

ANTI-RACIST campaigners intended picketing the Old Bailey on Monday 11 September, when the trial re-opens of a white man accused of murdering a young black mother in a firebomb attack in Leyton, east London.

The attack happened during a party at a tower block in Leyton on 17 July 1994. Survivors say a balaclava-clad man entered, brandishing what looked like a machine gun, and threw inflammable liquid on the floor, which quickly ignited. In the blaze and ensuing panic, 26-year-

old Donna O'Dwyer fell 200 feet to her death.

A white man from the same flats was arrested two days later. When the trial first opened, on 24 April this year, black people were shocked when prosecutors played down any suggestion of a racist angle. The trial was adjourned on legal grounds. It is now expected to last three weeks.

Leyton Race Attack Support Group has called a picket for Monday 11 September, 10am, at the Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey), near St Paul's tube.

This process joined with the continuing attempts of the Brit-

ish government to draw the Republican movement into structures of government and at every stage the Tories were involved, either directly through 'secret' meetings or by regular briefing.

With the Framework document launched by the London and Dublin governments in February of this year the Tories believed they had the basis for Sinn Fein participation in a restored parliament at Stormont.

As well as the proposals for a six-county legislature defended by the British army, the document also includes ideas for a north-south body with consultative and executive powers.

Even though the Framework document retains the Unionist veto for any constitutional changes, Sinn Fein's enthusiasm for it is based on the belief that it is a slow, evolutionary approach to Irish unity.

From the start of the ceasefire the Adams leadership has been acutely aware that there would be difficulties in holding the support of the nationalist population.

The Republican grassroots had been prepared for only a three month halt and the current frenzied appeals to the Tories to start all-party talks on the Framework document are a reflection of the concern over a new leadership emerging in opposition to the political manoeuvring.

Adams has repeatedly threatened the British government that failure to reach a settlement with

Difficulties

him could, in several years time, see the IRA re-emerge under a new leadership.

With comments like that he confirms that it would be very difficult for the present leadership to restart a military campaign.

This is not only because of the pressures from US politicians or Adams's assurance in an 'Irish Times' article that assertions that the IRA campaign was over 'for good' were the 'correct' interpretations.

With its acceptance of the Framework document and Britain's declaration that it is neutral, the Sinn Fein leadership has abandoned the philosophical basis for the bomb and bullet.

But the so-called 'peace process' can provide no basis for resolving either the alienation of the nationalist population from the state or the fears of the Protestant working-class that it is being abandoned by Britain.

The repressive legislation which was an integral part of the old Stormont apparatus will be an essential part of any restored administration.

It is inevitable that a new leadership will arise from the nationalist youth. As always the crucial question is: will it be able to develop the programme and methods which can forge links with sections of the Protestant workers?

The removal of partition and socialism are inextricably linked goals — not because they fit some pre-conceived position — but because there can be no other way for either.

Adams has repeatedly threatened the British government that failure to reach a settlement with

policy behind a deal with Milosevic ('Beaten, handcuffed and sent to war', 15 July 1995).

Meanwhile European Union emissary Carl Bildt was having talks with Milosevic in Belgrade, on the plan agreed last year by the US, British, French, German and Russian governments to carve-up Bosnia between a Bosnian-Croat federation and the Chetnik 'Republika Srpska'.

This would effectively end Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent multi-cultural state, and divide former Yugoslavia between US-German and French-British fields of influence' ('Bosnia: Tories aim for deal with war criminals', 22 July).

Still unclear, Simon? Perhaps we should simply keep reprinting the same article, but it would be tedious both for us and the reader, and would hardly constitute 'the whole picture'.

Commenting on Paddy Ashdown's account of Tudjman drawing a map of a carved-up Bosnia on the back of a menu after dinner, I said: 'It is the lines drawn by British and other imperialist statesmen on maps in Geneva that have proved more dangerous for Bosnia' (12 August).

Simon protests that it's 'completely wrong to counterpose Tudjman's carve up to the imperialists' carve up'. I quite agree. What I was contrasting was the relative significance of the maps.

It was Lord Owen's partition plans, and the imperialists' secret manoeuvres, that encouraged Tudjman's previous aggression against Bosnia.

So it would be again. And I would suggest that the British bourgeois media, doubtless with Foreign Office briefings, is only trying to set the scene with its

Sacked for being a trade unionist

BY ANTON MOCTONIAN

A STRIKE ballot has been called in Camden UNISON over the sacking of burns-unit nurse Dave Carr, leader of University College Hospital and Middlesex Hospital workers, on a rigged charge of 'gross misconduct'.

Carr is described by Brian Morgan, consultant surgeon at Middlesex hospital burns unit, as 'a first rate nurse and an important member of his team'.

Morgan told a jam-packed public meeting on Thursday 23 August: 'We do not have enough nurses in this area to lose somebody like Dave on an issue unrelated to his work'.

Carr's sacking is thought to be connected to his role in defence of the jobs of 400 porters and domestics. Management was looking for something to use against him and now, five months after he had an argument with a hospital manager on a trade union issue, he is being victimised.

Two months after the incident management called an investigation. A further two months passed and he was called into a meeting to discuss his conduct. Without any prior notice he was informed at the meeting that it would hear a charge of 'gross misconduct' against him.

Ten days later the result of the

'investigation' was conveyed to him: he was sacked. He was told to leave the hospital immediately and warned that if he did not do so management would call the police to have him removed.

Carr explained that management had breached procedure. This is the first case of 'gross misconduct' in which the accused member of staff has not been suspended, pending investigation.

Dispute

Paula Williams, a UNISON union official at UCH and Middlesex said: 'We are now on the verge of a major dispute over the victimisation of a shop steward. UCH is being run more and more like a business with multi-skilling and local pay bargaining as opposed to a national agreement'.

She announced that the ballot is for strike actions and she called for the widest possible campaign to defend Carr. The public meeting was held to rally support in other UNISON branches, and trade unions, particularly in the public sector.

RMT executive committee member Bob Crowe spoke at the meeting and there were solidarity messages from local unions as well as from MPs Bernie Grant and Ken Livingstone.

Messages of support, contact: 0171-636 8333 x 4765.

Newham Aid for Bosnia set up

ANTI-RACIST campaigners in Newham, east London, have established 'Newham Aid for Bosnia'. The aims of the organisation are to support Workers Aid convoys, explain the importance of Bosnia's struggle for independence and campaign for the lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia. Newham Aid for Bosnia supporters have held several organising meetings and have already held one public collection for Workers Aid. As a result local people have come forward to organise workplace collections.

A leaflet has been printed and distributed and the first issue of a newsletter explaining the background to the Bosnian crisis has been published. Newham Aid for Bosnia is to have another public collection on Saturday 2 September between 11.00am and 2.00pm at Queen's Road market, Upton Park. There will also be a stall at the Newham Unity festival at Canning Town Recreation Ground, Prince Regent Lane, on Sunday 3 September.

'Croatia, like Britain, is "two nations"'

Last week there appeared a comment by Simon Pirani on Workers Press's failure to come forward with 'a warning about Tudjman's policy' and, referring to a comment by Charlie Pottins, put forward the suggestion that 'Croatia's victory could renew its designs on Bosnia'. CHARLIE POTTINS responds

I'm always pleased to see Simon Pirani (Comment, Workers Press, 5 August) taking an interest in our little efforts, and grateful for any information he can provide. I must admit that in trying to keep abreast of developments in the Balkans, it hadn't occurred to me to consult the 'Sunday Mirror'.

But the trouble with that story about Croat fascists organising weekend trips for other fascists 'to snipe at Serb civilians' is that it sounds just like the report a few years ago that Russian nationalists were 'joining weekend trips to loose off a few rounds at civilians in Sarajevo' (Workers Press, 6 March 1993).

That seemed more feasible during the prolonged siege of Sarajevo, Chetnik snipers on surrounding hills have been able to target people like fairground racks. Knin, a hill-stronghold, couldn't be so vulnerable, and wasn't besieged like this.

Maybe one side did imitate the other, or perhaps someone hanging Chetnik propaganda just thought it a good yarn to twist round.

Anyway, I presume the fascists invited for trips in Croatia recently did not include the British group C18, which is reported

to side with the Serb Chetniks (as does Russia's Zhirinovskiy, of course). Nor the Italian fascists who renewed World War II connections by inviting Krajina Serb 'prime minister' Bora Mikelic to their conference in Trieste last year? ('Italian fascists greet Chetniks', Workers Press, 2 July 1994).

The presence of neo-Nazis and mercenaries in Croatia is old 'news'. It was well covered in 'Searchlight' magazine, and on television; and we referred in Workers Press to 'the Croat fascist militia with which German and British neo-Nazis have been gaining experience. ('Who Supplied the Guns?', Workers Press, 6 March 1993).

On 30 October 1993 Mike Cooke reported on Croat Ustashe atrocities at Stupni Do, near Vares: 'CROAT FASCISTS MASSACRE OVER 80 BOSNIANS'.

Perhaps Simon Pirani and I differ on working-class spontaneous consciousness, but we'd have to imagine the most amazing collective amnesia if we thought people in Bosnia had forgotten such experiences so soon.

In my article on 12 August I wrote that 'most Bosnians (and many Croats) remain distrustful of Croatia's President Tudjman. There have been recurring rumours of a secret understanding between him and Milosevic, like that under which he encouraged Croat nationalists to stab Bosnia in the back two years ago.'

Defeats

Insufficient? But after Bosnia-Herzegovina army defeats of Croat forces brought the ceasefire which Bosnians saw as a 'breathing space', Dot Gibson (in Croatia) and Keith Scotcher warned against German and US aims behind Tudjman (No illusions in Bosnia "accords", Workers Press, 12 March 1994).

In October 1994, we reported the Croat daily 'Slobodna Dalmacija's' allegation of secret contacts between the Tudjman and Milosevic regimes, and outrage over French foreign minister Juppé's moves to broker a carve-up deal ('Bosnians attack UN blackmail', 29 October 1994).

In February, I wrote: 'Many Bosnians — and many people in Croatia too — remain suspicious that the Western powers may encourage Croatian President Tudjman and the Croat nationalists to do a deal at Bosnia's expense, as they did when the war started.'

'US government policy is to impose a Croat-Bosnian federation while leaving Serb nationalists areas to federate with Serbia — effectively partitioning Bosnia' ('Bihac war continues despite UN ceasefire', 18 February 1995).

After Croat forces regained territory in western Slavonia, I wrote: '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' ('Break with Tories on Bosnia', 27 May 1995).

An article in July mentioned secret talks between US Congressman Bill Richardson and Milosevic, commenting: 'The Serbian leader wants to renew his axis with Croatian leader Tudjman, and carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina between a Bosnian-Croat federation and the "Republika Srpska". The Muslims, and all those Bosnians who oppose "ethnic" partition, would be betrayed by such a "peace".'

I added that British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind would try to pull US foreign

policy behind a deal with Milosevic ('Beaten, handcuffed and sent to war', 15 July 1995).

Meanwhile European Union emissary Carl Bildt was having talks with Milosevic in Belgrade, on the plan agreed last year by the US, British, French, German and Russian governments to carve-up Bosnia between a Bosnian-Croat federation and the Chetnik 'Republika Srpska'.

Divide

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Still unclear, Simon? Perhaps we should simply keep reprinting the same article, but it would be tedious both for us and the reader, and would hardly constitute 'the whole picture'.

Commenting on Paddy Ashdown's account of Tudjman drawing a map of a carved-up Bosnia on the back of a menu after dinner, I said: 'It is the lines drawn by British and other imperialist statesmen on maps in Geneva that have proved more dangerous for Bosnia' (12 August).

Simon protests that it's 'completely wrong to counterpose Tudjman's carve up to the imperialists' carve up'. I quite agree. What I was contrasting was the relative significance of the maps.

It was Lord Owen's partition plans, and the imperialists' secret manoeuvres, that encouraged Tudjman's previous aggression against Bosnia.

So it would be again. And I would suggest that the British bourgeois media, doubtless with Foreign Office briefings, is only trying to set the scene with its

speculation, which Simon finds so impressive, about Croatia's 'long-standing dreams', and Tudjman's next move.

On 18 September 1993, while the first Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy wound its way across Europe, Bob Myers warned against the Geneva peace talks and the 'imperialist vultures', who had 'helped Serb and Croat forces to pin down and destroy Bosnia' ('Bosnia "peace" talks draw noose tighter', 18 September 1993).

When the convoy entered Croatia, members were unsure what to expect. Fighting was still going on between Bosnians and Croats, and comrades were worried about fascist influence.

But they found the biggest obstacle in the convoy's path was the UN; whereas Croat working people, from the trade unions to the people in Zagreb who came out to cheer Workers Aid's blockade of the UN headquarters, were on our side. And this, I repeat, was while hostilities were still taking place.

In Croatia, as in Britain, there are 'two nations'. Workers Press reported the detention of our editor by HVO forces in Mostar last year (20 August 1994), and that of

Workers Aid member Alyoscia d'Onofrio (8 April).

But we have also been able to note the struggles of Croat trade unionists and journalists. We've reported resistance to evictions of Serbs in Zagreb (18 October 1994), as well as Croat civil rights groups' concern over atrocities in the Krajina (last week).

We published the message of solidarity from Croatian trade unionists to the 22 July Bosnian solidarity demonstration in London. Croat friends have joined Bosnians on the demonstration and in the non-stop picket. They are not fascists, nor do they have any nationalist 'dreams' or 'designs on Bosnia'.

People

The Tory media didn't even cover the Croat and Bosnian ambassadors' press conference, so I doubt if it will pay attention to 'ordinary' Bosnian and Croat people. But I do think 'a militant of the workers' movement and member of the Workers Revolutionary Party' should. It is getting to know this 'other Croatia' (just like the 'other Serbia') that gives us confidence.

See further comments, pages 2 and 7.

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)

Please send me information about the WRP

Name date

Address

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

Send to: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

The Edinburgh Film Festival by Terry Brotherstone

The telling power

FEW things could better illustrate the dilemma facing successful young film-makers today than the contrast between the two movies by Gillies Mackinnon shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival.

Small Faces, made without international funding which would have involved casting compromises, is an energetic, lovingly located story of gangland Glasgow in the late 1960s. Established actors Clare Higgins and Ian McElhinney play a widowed mother and her half-American brother-in-law. But most of the rest of the cast was recruited from teenage Glasgow last year.

The film pushes credibility to its frontiers at times (but then so does a good deal of what actually goes on in 'the dear green place'), and there are moments when you feel that Mackinnon and his brother Billy (producer and co-writer) have taken the opportunity simply to throw in events from their own adolescence that they have always wanted to film. But it all adds up to a fine, confident narrative, full of incident, gallus wit, and terrific youthful characterisation, about a particular place at a definite moment of history.

More, however, may be heard of Mackinnon's *A Simple Twist of Fate* — but only because it stars and was written by Steve Martin. The plot comes from George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner*, but the story, set in Virginia in the 1980s and early 1990s, is a piece of hokum notable only because it allows Martin to file further amusing case notes for his studies in modern American paternity.

It is standard fare — corrupt politician (Gabriel Byrne) with barren wife (Laura Linney) seeks to recover custody of the illegitimate child (six precocious actresses) he denied in her hour of need, years before. But bitter, reclusive furniture-maker (Martin) fights for the little girl who calls him 'Dad' and makes him feel human. The law favours the rich, but *Fate* steps in...

Intelligence

Mackinnon does it as well as anyone could, but it is difficult to see the same creative intelligence at work as is evident in *Small Faces*. Will there, however, be the backing for directors and screenwriters like Mackinnon to develop the tradition of Scottish feature film-making that is now establishing a tenuous hold? Or is the Hollywood blend of bland humanism (as in *A Simple Twist...*) and designer sex'n'violence what the future holds?

Not that everything from the home of the movies is bad, or that a little well contextualised violence goes amiss. Gabriel Byrne fans, disappointed with his mildly villainous politician in the Martin-Mackinnon



Little Bobby Hutton (Wesley Jonathan), Bobby Seale (Courtney B. Vance), Tyrone (Bokeem Woodbine)

film, will prefer *The Usual Suspects*. If you have ever enjoyed a whodunit, a film noir thriller, or the best of Quentin Tarantino, this Bryan Singer movie about a search for Mr Big will grab you from the moment the titles pause classically on the screen against the background of street-lighting reflected on a black river.

It sustains interest and tension, and narrates in a conditional way, never letting you be sure you're getting the truth, teasing you into thinking you've spotted a flaw and then showing that you haven't.

Maybe too much of its appeal lies in solving the mystery for it to be a film you will want to see again, and it may leave you with no more lasting satisfaction than an honourable en-

counter with a crossword puzzle. But, of its kind, it is very good indeed.

Korea, a low-budget but distinguished film by the Irish director Cathal Black, beautifully shot in County Cavan by Nic Morris, takes us back to the basic values of storytelling, rooted in time and place. Set in 1952, it's about John Doyle (Donal Donnelly) who tries to make his teenage son Eamonn (Andrew Scott) emigrate to America, knowing that this may result in his conscription to the US army and death in the Korean war. The compensation is rumoured to be \$10,000.

John Doyle's livelihood from freshwater fishing is snatched from him by the Dublin government; and Eamonn is in love with Una (Fiona Moloney), daughter of Ben Moran (Vass Anderson), the local official John blames for the loss of his fishing licence. Thirty years before, Ben fought with the Free Staters. John was an anti-Treaty man in the civil war, and has had nightmares ever since he witnessed the execution of a lad about Eamonn's age in Mountjoy jail.

Ben Moran, who, in John Doyle's eyes, betrayed the cause, now seems to have everything, even a good pension from his own GI son's death. Eamonn's mother died young. For John, their son embodies his own love for her. Yet, rather than lose him to the economic realities of Ben Moran's way of life and to his daughter's bed, John is prepared to see the boy emigrate and die.

Korea is based on a short story by John McGahern. It excites confidence in its historical truthfulness,

not in the sense that what it portrays actually happened, but in the broader one that it takes a pivotal moment in history and shows the agonies of social transition through meaningful personal stories.

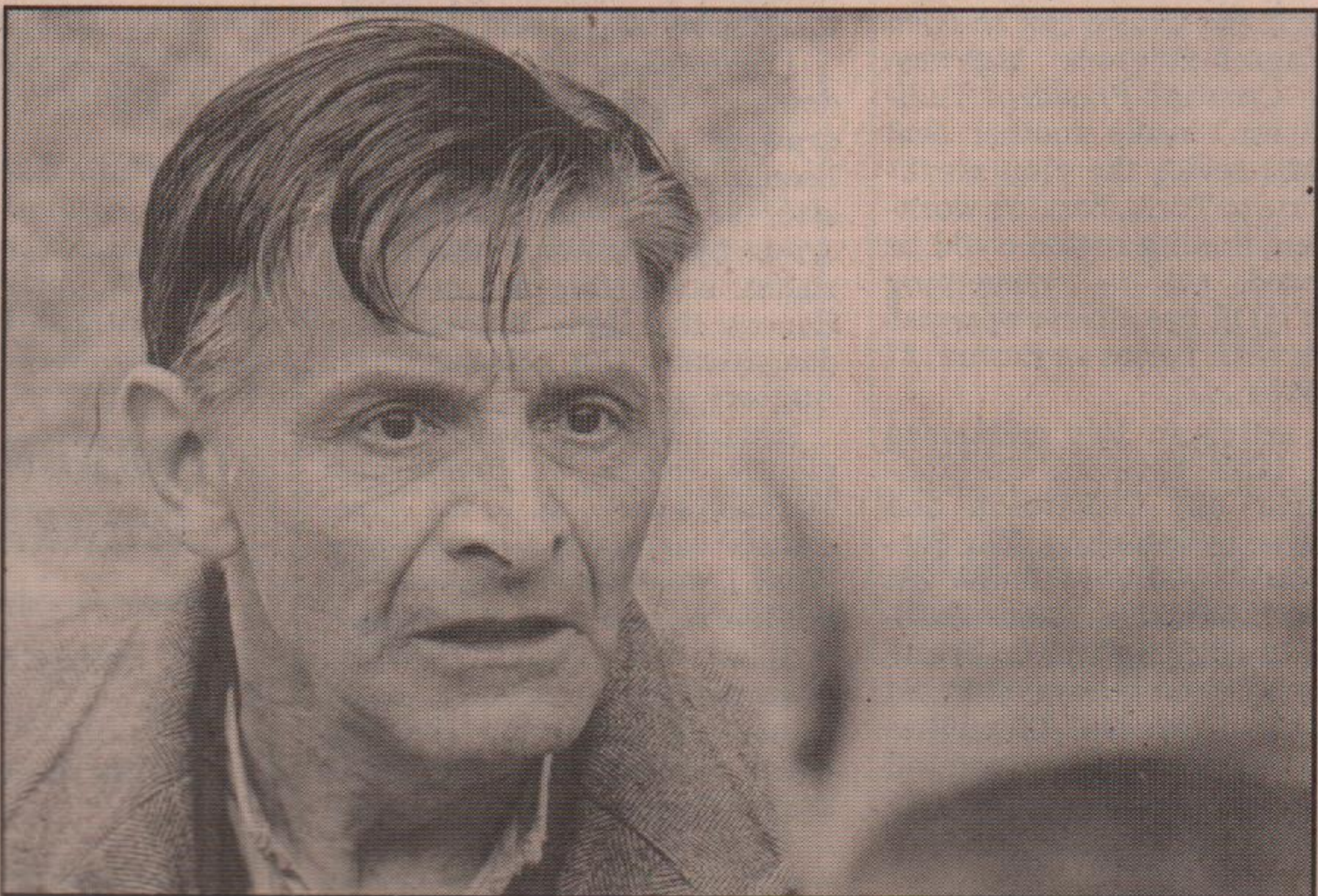
Ken Loach and Jim Allen do that in an even more important way with their tale of the betrayal of the Spanish revolution *Land and Freedom* (of which more nearer the release date). By launching his event with *Land and Freedom*, Film Festival director Mark Cousins set a tone for at least one major strand in its overall vision of the state of the art. Politically engaged movies which use fiction, or 'faction', based on historical narrative, were strongly in evidence.

Already released is Nikita Mikhalov's *Burnt by the Sun*, the 1995 Oscar winner for best foreign-language film. It unites grand scale with detailed nuance in a way that makes you aware that this is a movie maker who comes from the theatrical tradition of Chekov.

Penetrated

It is 1936 in rural Russia. A conservative way of life is penetrated by a variety of absurdities. Troops threaten to exercise all over the crops. A bathing party is press-ganged into acting as victims in an exercise to train for a gas attack. Giant balloons are being launched to bear portraits of Stalin across the sky.

Sergei Petrovich Kotov (Mikhalov) is a hero of the revolution and a self-made man. His young wife Marusia (Ingeborga Dapku-



John Doyle confronts his long-time enemy Ben Moran in *Korea*

Inside left

Faraway but close

visitor from Mauritius dropped in last week. Travelling down Whitehall, he'd seen the Non-Stop Bosnia t-shirt, and come back for a chat. Seeing Workers Press, he was keen to meet us again for further discussion.

Although his group back home knew nothing about the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, they had heard of Leon Trotsky. As high school students they'd asked a teacher what became of this revolutionary leader. He couldn't enlighten them, so they tried to find out for themselves.

As a result, the political group they formed acknowledges Trotsky's significance, with that of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

'We believe in Permanent Revolution,' he told us. They want to unite people around the Indian Ocean against the US base on Diego Garcia. Sounds big, but they have campaigned successfully against the death penalty in Mauritius; and attracted 3,000 people to a demonstration supporting Bosnia. The population of Mauritius is 1.10 million, roughly that of Tyne and Wear.

Desperate liars

As the movement in solidarity with the Bosnian people grows, so does the desperation of their enemies. In the so-called Communist Party of Great Britain's *Weekly Worker* (24 August), Eddie Ford says: 'The Workers Revolutionary Party, obscenely, welcomes the mass expulsion of Krajina Serbs.'

This is not just misinterpretation. It is a deliberate lie, from the Stalin pool of falsification.

Ford cites my remark that people in Bihac could breathe again thanks to the 'smashing of the Serb-Chetnik gangster-statelet in the Krajina'.

Yes, we were glad the Croatian offensive and the determination of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Army's 1st Corps in Bihac relieved 150,000 people there from siege, starvation, and the threat of genocide.

What Ford conceals, is that my article also said: 'Many Serbs simply want to get away from the nationalist war. We must demand their right to either go to Serbia, or return to their homes in Croatia in peace' ('Bihac breathes again: but no thanks to UN', Workers Press, 12 August).

The WRP doesn't just make statements. Through Workers Aid for Bosnia, established largely at the urging of a Serb comrade of the Workers International, we have pioneered practical links between workers in Britain and Bosnia. This helps the fight against 'ethnic cleansing', and working-class unity.

Yet Ford, whose group opposed it, declares 'Working class unity to oppose the nationalist stitch-up is unfortunately a demand which is not being raised.'

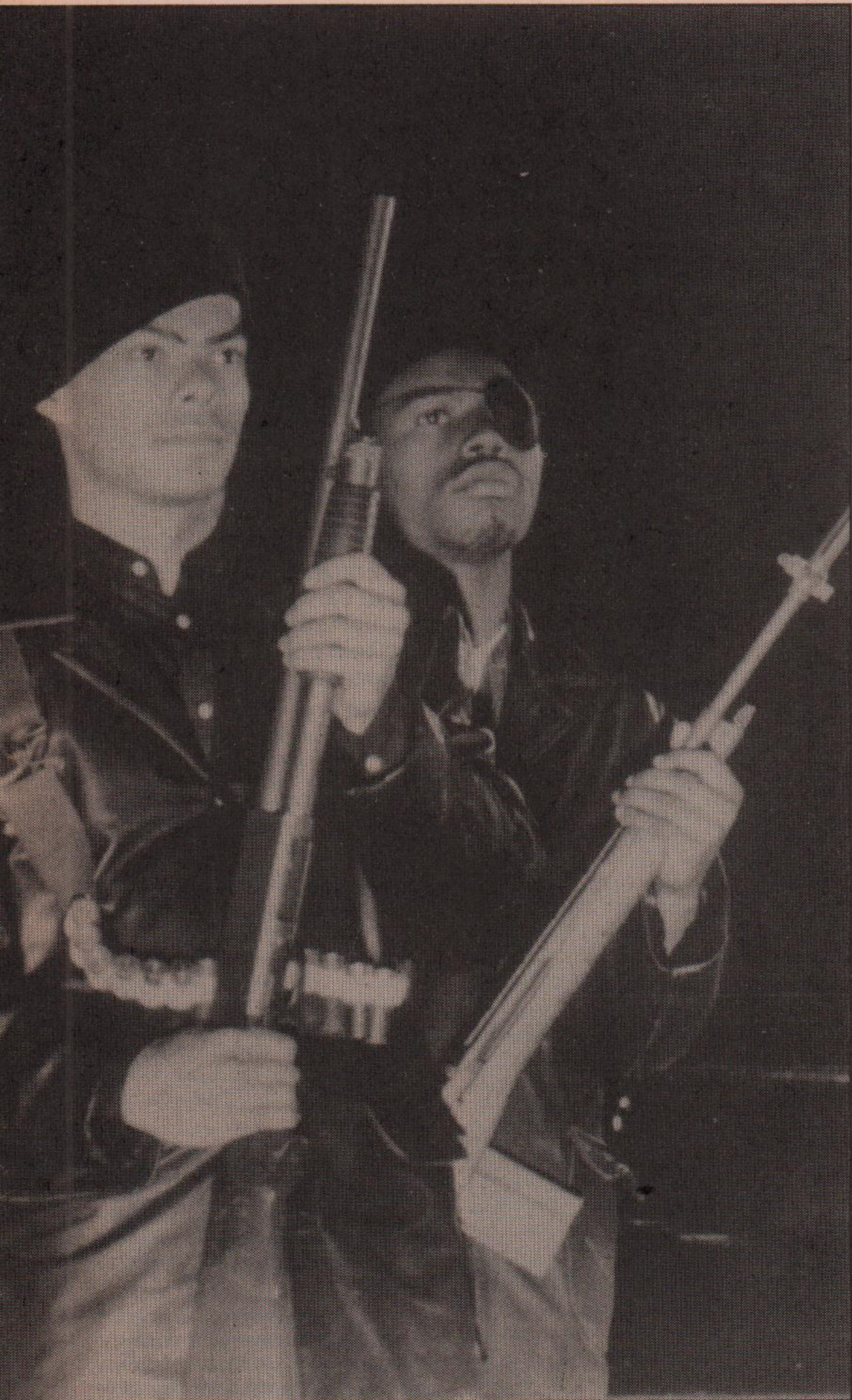
For these sectarians, as for British chauvinists, neither Bosnian, Croat or Serb workers matter much, except as debating points. Following his colleague Phil Kent's rediscovery that South Slavs are 'non-historic peoples', fit only to be 'hired butchers' (*Weekly Worker*, 3 August), Ford announces that in former Yugoslavia the working class no longer exists 'critically, only sociologically'.

If Serb fascism had its way, this multi-ethnic working class would no longer exist *biologically*. Bihac would be mass graves like those at Srebrenica. Tuzla be destroyed like Sarajevo was.

But Ford says complacently, 'A working class agenda needs to be constructed from amongst the ruins of Yugoslavia. Workers and their families must be rescued, but don't let it be a rescue agenda of these...'

Charlie Pettie

er of cinema



Huey Newton (Marcus Chong) and Cy (Tyrin Turner) in *Panther*

naite) is from a local upper-class family. They speak French, play the piano and yearn for croquet; he is determinedly Russian and insists on family football. Marusia's former lover Dmitri (Oleg Menshikov) arrives. He has clearly known Kotov in the past and they have secrets: mutual secrets and secrets from each other. It is the period of the Moscow trials...

At times you think, as Lenin famously did about a resolution of the Communist International, this is 'too Russian and too long'. And you could argue that the film doesn't advance the political analysis of Stalinism one whit. But that's not its purpose. The length is needed to establish a sense of nervous normality based on the interpenetration of conflicting conceptions of social legitimacy. The rapid, grim ending says little about causation, about why it happened like that, but a lot about mentalities and process, about how it was done. Without the length the brilliantly nuanced detail would lack meaningful context.

There is detail aplenty, but less nuance, in *Bombay*, Mani Ratnam's searing appeal for religious tolerance in India. Based on the communal riots in Maharashtra's sprawling capital — the subcontinent's main western port — in 1992-93, it has been described by *Time* magazine as 'an Indian *Schindler's List*'. Spielberg may not be too happy with the comparison. Yet the maestro of Hollywood yarn-spinning has obviously influenced Ratnam, as has the tradition of cinema as an art with mass appeal in India itself. *Bombay* is

unashamedly propagandist and unapologetic about its use of instantly recognisable stock situations. It starts with Romeo and Juliet (Hindu and Muslim) and passes through chaos to hopes of reconciliation. It concentrates on the people tearing each other apart, but strongly implies that the monied interests and the religious hierarchs have stirred it all up.

The film hints that post-imperial nationalism is not the answer, and that some form of genuinely communal society is. It is a demand for attention to matters discussed in Britain (the former imperial power) only spasmodically, if at all.

But if you want to be zapped by a faction based on a history that you will be aware of — at least if you're fortysomething plus and tuned in to American culture — the van Peebles are coming. *Panther*, directed by Mario van Peebles and written by dad Melvin on the basis of his own novel, is a compelling, action-packed account of the Black Panther movement in the Bay Area of California from 1966 through 1968.

Important historical figures are here — Huey Newton (Marcus Chong), Bobby Seale (Courtney B. Vance), Eldridge Cleaver (Anthony Griffith) et al. So are many memorable incidents. But remember it's based on a novel. It will be interesting to see if those who object to the propaganda element in *Land and Freedom*, get hot under the collar about this one. Precisely because they deal with real incidents in a fictionalised way, rather than using fiction to get at an essential historical

truth, the van Peebles actually raise far greater problems of method than do Jim Allen and Ken Loach.

But *Panther* is a big, important and gripping movie. It deserves to get up the noses of the American right and it already has done. Did that great, freedom-loving cross-dresser, J. Edgar Hoover, create the drugs crisis through his war on the Panthers? This is another powerful piece of story-telling that should start a politically explosive historical debate.

Waterworld, I can report, is not Kevin Costner's only current evocation of gushing liquid. He stars also in John Avnet's *The War* which is an assault on the collective tear-duct. A man's gotta do... and, if he can't, then he's gotta see that his son can. The interest lies in the post-War (i.e. Vietnam) setting and in Hollywood's attempt to get junior to see that paw (and maw) were only doing their duty as they saw it. You might weep a bit, but you'll hate yourself if you do. Only cultural historians being paid danger-money should go.

Ghastly

No shame in weeping (and laughing) at *Go Now*, a fine attempt to tell a story of multiple sclerosis. You can see it on BBC-TV later this month. In cinema terms, the happy ending is pretty ghastly; though I'm glad to report that it apparently reflects real life since the story is based on what happened to Paul Powell, who co-wrote it with Jimmy McGovern (of *Cracker* fame). There's a good stab at an amateur footballer stricken with the disease from the talented Robert Carlyle (the gay lover in Antonia Bird's award-winning *Priest* last year), and the film as a whole rises well above the level of its obvious, and very proper, consciousness-raising function.

Of *Carrington*, starring Emma Thompson, and Jonathan Pryce as Lytton Strachey, more when it opens later this month. And there are two of the many films I wasn't able to see on which I should report. Benjamin Ross's *The Young Poisoner's Handbook* is, says the press pack, 'a gleefully macabre cautionary tale' about a suburban London schoolboy's obsession with toxic substances and descent into madness in the 1960s. (I've always suspected it of my London friends!) Some said it was the Festival's best new film. And Karl Francis, whom I've seen described as a Welsh Ken Loach, premiered his *Streetlife* — in which a working class, single mother, supporting her abusing father and drug-addicted sister, has to face up to a pregnancy resulting from an affair with a married man.

But the Festival session which director Cousins deemed the 'most important' of all was devoted, not to a premiere or a feature film, but to a documentary, already publicly shown, about the war in former Yugoslavia — Jill Craigie's *Two Hours from London*, produced by Jason Lehel and presented by Michael Foot. It is even more powerful on the big screen than on the box. Propagandist, yes. Weak in its analysis of the Croatian government's role, yes. But essentially true — certainly! And true because of its committed standpoint, not in spite of it.

Its final image — of a young Bosnian boy holding up his arms, one an amputated stump, the hand on the other making a victory sign — justified, as no other single image could, the very existence of the Film Festival. Cinema can be misused and it can be abused. But, like nothing else, it also has the power to tell it like it is, and to begin a discussion of how it must become.

Worked to death

ONE of America's least desirable exports is coming rapidly to Europe. No, not *Windows 95*, but longer working hours.

A new book *The Overworked American*, written by Harvard economist Juliet Schor, shows that in the 20 years to 1991 the annual work schedule of Americans rose by 163 hours a year on average — the equivalent of a month's extra work a year.

The trend over the previous 100 years for hours of work to fall seems to have been reversed. In fact the average working week recently hit the highest levels since the US Department of Labour started keeping records in 1956. The average for manufacturing workers is now 41.4 hours per week.

In some General Motors factories a 50-hour week is today the minimum demanded, and often part of a union-negotiated contract. Workers are regularly ordered to do more and those who refuse can be sacked.

There is mounting evidence that many manufacturing firms have resorted to compulsory overtime in the recent recession as a means of forgoing capital expansion and to avoid hiring more full-time workers, chief executive of Allied Signal, Lawrence Bossidy, says:

'Rather than hiring more people permanently, companies prefer to deal with overtime and use temporary workers. In the long run, when the business cycle turns down again, this strategy will prove to be better than in the past, when payroll expansions led to huge lay-offs during downturns.'

Some workers may be hooked on overtime but GM has had two recent strikes by assembly-line workers demanding remission of their overtime loads. Other firms, including Caterpillar and Japanese-owned Bridgestone Tire, have also experienced bitter disputes involving overtime.

Some managers are also against the rising trend of overtime working on the grounds that this leads to poorer-quality work. Workers at GM report that more and more vehicles are being sent to the firm's repair plants. Sickness and injuries usually increase alongside overtime working.

Another trick that the bosses are increasingly resorting to is to declare their workers 'exempt'. Under US labour laws such workers are not entitled to overtime pay.

Many computer programmers and ex-newspaper journalists have gone to court, claiming that contrary to the ruling of their employers they are really 'non-exempt' workers, that is entitled to compensation for extra hours worked. They have had little joy.

In a recent case in California — the richest US state — a supermarket chain gave store clerks the title of 'assistant manager', paid them \$300 (£187) a week 'salary', and worked them 72 hours, which came to less than the country's statutory minimum of \$4.10 an hour.

Under existing British law the same thing could happen here.

But it is in Japan that the trend to longer working weeks has reached its peak. No wonder that Japan is the only country with an official diagnosis of death by overwork.

The improvement in the techniques of production under capitalism — what the apologists for the ruling class used to call the 'scientific and technological revolution' — does not mean the release from toil and drudgery.

It involves longer hours for those in work and brings earlier death and the greater chance of accidents. For other workers it means semi-permanent unemployment and the dire poverty that this almost always entails.

'United' Germany's costs

THE considerable costs of German re-unification are still a great stone round the neck of the German ruling class. Despite all talk of a 'recovery' the blunt truth is that employment continues to fall.

One the reasons for the stagnation of the economy is the high taxes that were levied earlier this year, which were used to help subsidise the ailing economy in the east but have depressed consumption levels.

Germany's competitiveness in world markets has been hit by a combination of the wage rises of near 4 per cent that the employers have been forced to yield, and the slump of the dollar, which has forced up the price of German exports — by almost 5 per cent against a number of southern European currencies.

It was this increasing world competition against German exports that has forced rationalisations and redundancies throughout German industry. Even the most advanced sectors of the economy are faring badly, as shown by the current problems of the Daimler-Benz group and its Dasa and Fokker aerospace interests.

German industry is renowned for the quality of its products. But it becomes increasingly clear that Germany is now relying excessively on a limited number of traditional industries to the relative neglect of hi-tech industries.

Nor is Germany in a position to make good the deficiency in its industrial sector by stepping up its financial activities abroad. The strength of Germany's banks is still felt largely at home and their international dimension remains dwarfed by those of their rivals in New York, Tokyo and London.

Prosperity — French style

THE Chirac government's economic policy is proving hugely successful. The central government recently slashed unemployment to under 3 million — by the simple expedient of changing the definitions.

Now it is the turn of the local mayors, who recently decided to put into operation another of Jacques Chirac's campaign promises, to eradicate 'the most shocking consequence of the new poverty... the homeless... forced to beg in order to survive.'

How? Simple: they will ban begging.

Michael Crépeau, the Socialist mayor of La Rochelle and a former justice minister, was first out of the blocks at the start of July when he announced that begging, drinking alcohol or loitering anywhere in the town were now illegal.

More than a dozen other towns, mainly in the south, quickly followed this Socialist lead. Politically the mayors concerned are a mixed bunch, including adherents of the National Front and the Communist Party.

Members of the government condemned the mayors for trying, in the words of prime minister Alain Juppé 'to give themselves a good conscience on the cheap'.

But the government's indignation began to ring somewhat less than sincere when the interior minister, Jean-Louis Debré sent out a circular reminding local authorities that while begging was not an offence in law, it could be subjected to 'restrictive measures' on condition that all activities liable to halt the passage of pedestrians were dealt with.

But even these limited restrictions are proving difficult to enforce. How do you fine somebody with nothing in their pockets? And what if the police tell a beggar to move on and he obeys... but merely moves on to the next street?

Obviously banning poverty outright is the French government's only possible answer.

Stop Bristol's Slave Ball!

JOHN CABOT was a 15th-century Genoa-born explorer who settled in Bristol, sailed westward in 1497, and 'discovered' Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, which he thought were part of Asia.

On 9 September the great and the good of Bristol are launching a replica of Cabot's ship the 'Matthew' to celebrate 500 years of Bristol's 'international trade', and are staging a grand evening ball in Queen Square. Tickets for this glittering event cost £75 each.

What is missing from these junketings organised by Bristol's Merchant Venturers is the slightest recognition of the key part played in their city's prosperous history by the slave trade and the trade in slave-produced sugar.

In fact there has been a campaign in the local press to make out that no slave-trading ever took place in Bristol.

This, of course, is pernicious nonsense. Bristol was built on the slave and sugar trades, without which, as the leading local merchant James Evan Baillie admitted in 1833, the city would have been a mere fishing port.

Bristol's merchants entered the slave trade in the first half of the 17th century, in direct breach of the Royal African Company's monopoly. By 1713 the mayor was calling the trade 'one of the great supports of our people'.

The slave trade was always closely connected with Bristol's local government, and a committee set up in the port in 1789 to oppose abolition included five ex-mayors and five ex-sheriffs.

One leading local slave-merchant, Onesiphorus Tyndall, was senior partner in Bristol's first bank, founded in 1750, and used some of his profits to buy land in Gloucestershire.

Philip John Miles, Bristol slave- and sugar-merchant, owned slaves in Jamaica and Trinidad — for whose loss he was handsomely compensated when they were emancipated in 1834 — and died in 1848 worth over £1 million. Skilled workers in Britain in that year earned an average of about 30 shillings a week.

Many advertisements offering individual black slaves for sale can be found in the pages of Bristol's 18th-century newspapers. Slaver captains, mates, and ship's surgeons were given 'privilege Negroes' as part of their perks, and would often raise a little extra cash by selling them off when they returned home.

On 31 August 1728 Captain John Gwythen put an advertisement in *Farley's Bristol Newspaper* offering for sale 'a Negro man about 20 years old'; on 23 June 1750 a black boy 'of about 12 years of age' was advertised for sale in the *Bristol Journal*; in the *Bristol Intelligencer* of 12 January 1754 'any gentleman or lady who wants a Negro Boy' was offered a 14-year-old, recently landed.

'To be sold, a Black Boy, about 15 years of age, capable of waiting at table', said an advertisement in the *Bristol Journal* of 20 June 1767; and 'a healthy Negro Slave named Prince, 17 years of age; extremely well grown' was advertised for sale in the same paper on 9 January 1768.

Now, these are historical facts which can no longer be swept under the carpet, even by Bristol's municipal worthies and captains of industry.

All credit to the ad hoc campaign that has sprung up in Bristol to put a stop to next Saturday's obscene celebrations.

'Stop the Slave Ball' says a leaflet issued by the Bristol People's Party, set up 'to oppose this disgusting celebration of slavery and the cosy ongoing co-opera-

PERSONAL COLUMN

tion between the Labour council, Tory scumbags and Merchant Venturers'. The leaflet declares:

'As horse-drawn carriages deliver the lords, ladies and Labour councillors to this nauseating spectacle, the rest of us are supposed to keep out of sight in St Pauls, Hartcliffe, Knowle West, Southmead and elsewhere in the city.

'Well, here's some news for the Queen Square Ball organisers: we're coming too and we won't be buying tickets!...

'Enough is enough! On Tuesday 5 September there will be a major public meeting against the Ball in Bristol. On Saturday 9 September there will be an open-air rally and a march from St Pauls to Queen Square to stop the Slave Ball.'

Court of justice?

LAST week I spent an afternoon in one of the central London magistrates' courts — not on my own account, but as a potential character witness on behalf of a young man of my acquaintance who had got involved in a street fight.

In the event he was bound over for a year to keep the peace, and my testimony wasn't needed. But before that case came up I sat through another one.

An elderly, poorly-looking black woman hobbled painfully into the dock on two walking-sticks. She was accused of having hit a bus conductor with one of her sticks when he told her to stop smoking on the top deck of his bus.

The evidence was confused and contradictory. The blow seems not to have been a very violent one, though the conductor claimed it had banged his inner cheek against a tooth and drawn blood.

He also claimed that she swore at him and threatened him, though he added that he couldn't understand much of what she was saying.

What was beyond dispute was that the conductor had halted the bus, the driver had radioed for the police, and the defendant had sat down on the pavement singing hymns until a vanload of police arrived to take her into custody.

And there in the court-room, in the course of her evidence denying the assault, she sang a hymn right through.

At length it turned out that she suffers from both epilepsy and diabetes. Now, these are both illnesses which can cause their victims to behave strangely: black-outs, convulsions, aggressive behaviour, and glossolalia (speaking in 'tongues') are not uncommon, and generally leave no trace in the sufferer's memory.

This defendant was found guilty and remanded for sentence to be passed at a later date.

Clearly, bus workers have the right to be protected from assault. But are the police given no training in distinguishing between those who are ill-disposed and those who are merely ill?

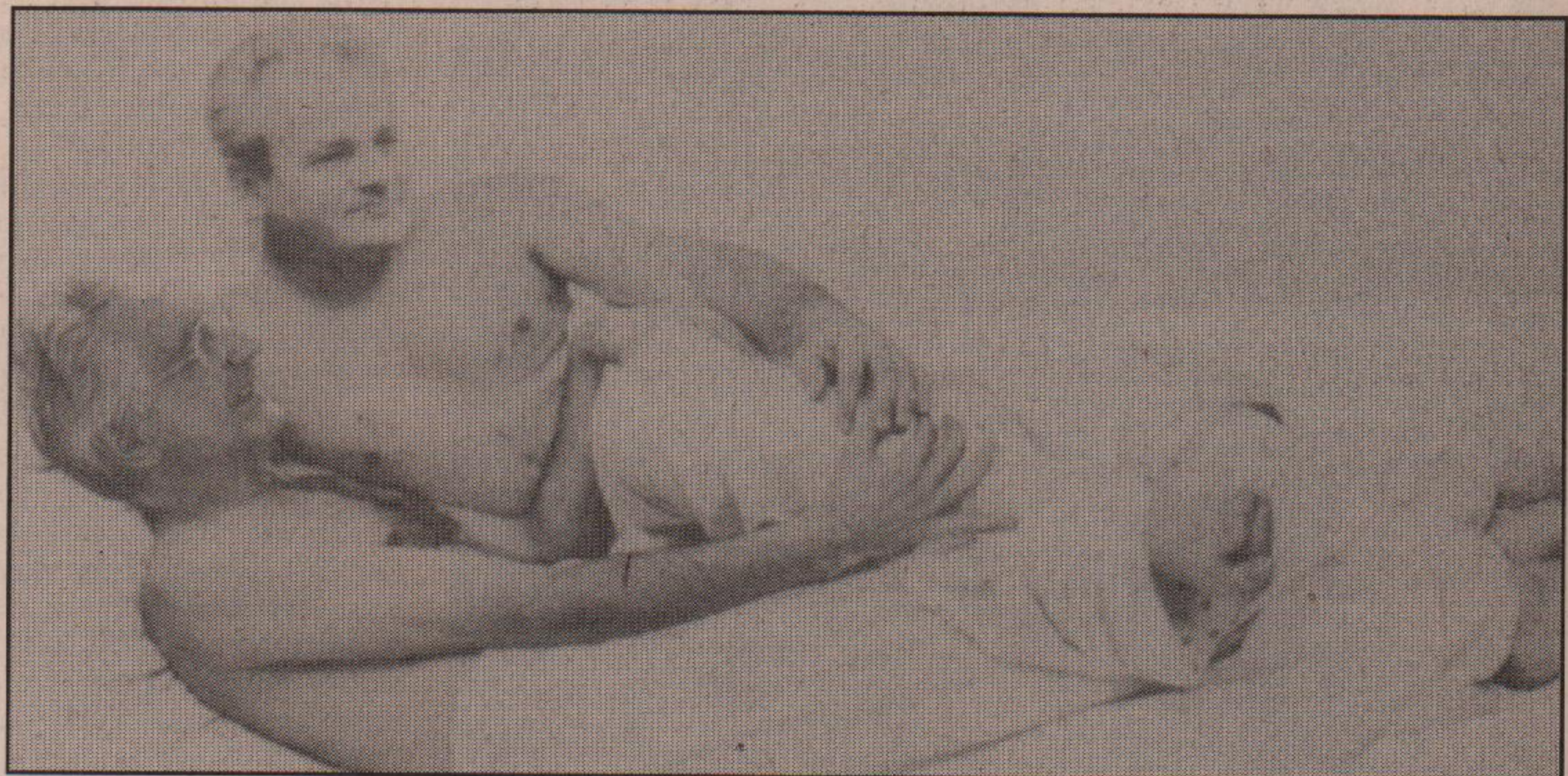
Would it not have been more sensible, and more humane, to take this woman to a hospital instead of a police station? And what purpose was served by charging her and dragging her through court proceedings?

I suspect that, had she been an elegantly dressed middle-class white lady instead of an old black woman in a headscarf, a different and more lenient course would have been taken.

Peter Fryer

The hue and cry over Croatia

Last week Workers Press carried a comment on its coverage of the Croatian offensive from Simon Pirani. In the same issue there were replies from Workers Press editor Mike Cooke and WRP secretary Cliff Slaughter. Here BOB ARCHER contributes to the discussion (see also Simon Pirani, Letters, page 2, and Charlie Pottins's comment, page 3)



When sheaves of pictures like these, critical of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman's relationship with Serb President Slobodan Milosevic in attempting to carve up Bosnia, appeared in the Croatian satirical magazine *Feral Tribune* in early 1994, the government took a dim view and immediately banned it — but not before it had sold out on the newstands. Is such a 'close' relationship possible now for the two leaders?

of Bosnia is the Tudjman regime.'

But wait a minute... are there not a few other factors at play here? For the last three years it has been the fascist gangs of Karadzic, backed by the British imperialists Rifkind, Hurd and Owen, who have stolen Bosnian land and massacred, raped and 'ethnically cleansed' Muslims in Bosnia.

This is 'an essential starting point' for all assertions of working-class internationalism. This is fascism; this is what you have to fight.

Pilloried

Every time Milosevic and Karadzic are justly pilloried as war criminals, their supporters howl that Bosnia and Croatia are imperialist puppets. This is the line for 'non-intervention', for neutrality, and thus ultimately for justifying Serb war crimes against Croatia and Bosnia.

But Simon leaves all the concrete situation out. His vaunted 'context', the full story, as it were, shrinks right down to... the ambitions of the unfortunate Tudjman and his 'regime'.

What he claims is the essence of the situation, that the unnamed 'imperialist powers' have (unanimously?) chosen the Tudjman regime as their 'main vehicle' for the division of Bosnia, is merely one further impression, which needs to be tested, first of all by integrating it into an overall analysis of the situation.

The most dangerous politics of all is to turn such an impression into a whole line of political action, to 'come forward with such a warning about Tudjman's policy' when Tudjman was actually unable to go to Moscow to make that sort of deal with Milosevic.

The theory has to be tested against experience. What has happened to all the speculation in the *Guardian* and the *Independent* about Krajina Serbs taking up arms against Bosnian government forces?

Serb conscripts who fled the Krajina, far from swelling the ranks of Karadzic's forces, now publicly demonstrate against being sent to fight in Bosnia.

Refugee families sent to Kosovo to bolster the Serb presence there against the Albanian population have refused to get off the trains.

But Simon persists in building a political line of march upon an impression. Obsessed by the idea that the Croat offensive on Krajina was merely a clever cover for dimembering Bosnia, Simon assumes that the Croat 'regime' has a common interest with the UN (an institution widely

detested in Croatia).

His concern is shared by journalists like Sarah Helm (*Independent on Sunday*, 20 August). She too asserts that 'the US has chosen Mr Tudjman as its new policeman in the region', although she at least has the grace to point out that this was against the opposition of 'the Western Europeans' (above all the British government).

In the same article Helm tried to talk up a resurgence of blind nationalism in Croatia, a marginalisation of oppositionists, and so forth.

She presents all Croats as brain-washed tools of Tudjman, with the only opposition emanating from a tiny beleaguered remnant of the middle class.

When Workers Aid is carefully and painstakingly building up relations with trade unionists and workers' organisations throughout Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, Simon wants us to hare off suddenly on a hunt for Croat fascists.

What Simon is really trying to do is what he emphatically denies: he is equating Croat behaviour in the Krajina with Serb ethnic cleansing, first in Croatia and later in Bosnia. That is why he has to attack the Croatian ambassador's assurances, reported in Workers Press, that Krajina Serb refugees can return.

Instantly

Even though he has 'far less day-to-day contact with Bosnia than many', Simon instantly 'can see reasons for taking his excellency's words... with a pinch of salt' because the man is a representative 'of an imperialist-backed regime'.

But Simon is not really asking us to 'take his excellency's words with a pinch of salt'. No serious Marxist takes anybody's (least of all a politician's) words at face value. At the same time no serious Marxist can decide by intuition exactly what words mean. But on the basis of the 'full picture' he has developed, Simon already 'sees' the key question in the Krajina: orchestrated attacks by fascists, which to say the least 'suits' the Croatian government (and the UN!) because it swells Karadzic's ranks.

In this, too, the *Independent* follows the same line as Simon. On 24 August, Sarah Helm described the destruction of abandoned Serb villages in Krajina, saying this testified to Croat determination never to let the refugees back. She claims President Tudjman's assurances that Serb refugees will be able to return are merely window-dressing to help Croatia 'build its relationship with the west, and

particularly the European Union'. It is odd that he should find that necessary if he is already 'the main vehicle' for carving up Bosnia on behalf of 'the imperialist powers'.

But surely, the real situation in ex-Yugoslavia cannot be intuited from a study of 'the facts' in general at a distance, leading to general denunciations of sin, but only on the basis of a real involvement, a conscious intervention which enables us to penetrate beyond appearances (not of themselves invalid, but always one-sided) to the real essential relations.

'Facts'

This cannot be done by assembling all the 'facts' at a distance and guessing which are the essential ones.

Our analysis must also grow from a real engagement with the Bosnian (and Croatian and Serbian) working class as an *active* real force at play. And they are not children. Most of those involved 'in the fight... to regain a multi-cultural Bosnia' have a far more material grasp than Simon Pirani of what Tudjman represents.

In fact Croat actions (no doubt including many excesses) are on a totally different level from the genocide at Srebrenica, Zepa and elsewhere by the Chetniks.

If Simon thinks the existence or not of fascist groups in Croatia is the key question (and there are plenty of ex-Stalinist apologists for Serbia who think it is) he should himself try to get more convincing evidence than a report in the *Sunday Mirror*.

'All these forces make up part of the picture', says Simon. But in a really all-round picture the essential forces emerge more clearly, the inessential ones recede into the background.

'We need to assess their relations objectively', he concludes. But the only way to test their relations objectively is to involve ourselves in them subjectively. The aim of Workers Aid, to which Workers Press gives wholehearted support, is to feed and strengthen the forces in Bosnia who have stood out against all comers to defend mixed communities living in peace and to sustain working-class organisation.

It is against our common experience with them that we gain an objective assessment of where the fascist danger lies.

The story Simon Pirani wants to tell is not at all 'fuller', it is actually a completely different story because he approaches the question as a contemplative outsider — despite all his work as a working-class militant for Workers Aid.

Convoy members report UN not welcome in Tuzla

The Tuzla Trade Union Convoy to Tuzla has just returned. It consisted of 16 trucks and around 80 people, most of them trade unionists from various parts of Europe. LESLEY THOMPSON spoke to a wide variety of people about their experiences in Tuzla and about the convoy's journey through Croatia and Bosnia. The following is a small selection of what she heard

PERHAPS the most important observation recalled by almost everyone on the convoy was the unanimity of Tuzla people that the war in Bosnia is not a war against Serbian people as such, but a defence of a multi-ethnic society against predominantly Chetnik fascists.

Hostility towards the United Nations is also now universal — they are definitely not welcome in Tuzla. During the period of early 'ethnic cleansing' many people saw the way in which UN forces assisted in this process — using aid as a means of dividing people into separate ethnic groups.

Unsurprisingly there is also a lot of a bad feeling towards the British government, and this spilled over once or twice onto English convoy members; Tony Myers was called 'Chetnik' and a Telecommunications worker said that until the British changed their appalling attitude he preferred not to speak in English.

The people of Tuzla have also witnessed the way in which the 'international community' has denied it the means of defending itself while at the same time continually breaking its commitments to protect civilians in the so-called 'safe-areas'.

Numerous people mentioned that if the Bosnian army had just a fraction of the UN military hardware they saw on the journey to Tuzla the war would have been ended a long time ago.

Tony Samphier said the people of Tuzla would not easily forget the massacre of so many innocent young people on 25 May, when 72 died when a Serb Chetnik shell hit a cafe area.

Nor would they forget how representatives of Western governments have distorted the nature of the conflict in Bosnia, how they have endorsed and harnessed nationalist propaganda to justify their policies of inaction — inaction which by all human standards amounts to collusion in the genocide of a people.

Convoy-drivers Brian Avey and Jim O'Sullivan said more than anything else it was vital that trade unionists raise these issues in British unions and alert ordinary working people to the vicious forces that have been unleashed in former Yugoslavia.

Rachel Robertson, a student from King's College Cambridge, was one of the 'Student Aid for Bosnia' representatives. 'Student Aid' consisted of three students, two friends, two aid trucks — one of which broke down in Germany — and a Leicester 'Student Aid' minibus. As well as delivering food and computers Rachel and her friends also presented the 600 students of Tuzla University with £500, donated by Manchester University Students Union.

After the Srebrenica massacre, Rachel and other students raised over £2,000 outside Cambridge Sainsbury's, and such were the feelings of revulsion



Members of the public service union UNISON — getting ready to set off above — were part of the Tuzla Trade Union Convoy that has just returned

and sympathy amongst Cambridge people that one craft worker donated her whole day's market takings of £250, and another shopper gave £100.

Rachel felt that 'Student Aid' to Tuzla University not only expressed a message of international solidarity but also recognised the critical importance of the role of education for the future reconstruction of Bosnia — for without training how could Bosnian people rebuild their society?

Books, journals, computer software, stationary — and even an up-to-the-minute Yearbook of UK Universities — requested by one of the University professors and donated by the publisher Macmillan was also delivered to the university by representatives of the Scottish TUC, the Communications Workers' Union, the GMB general workers' union, the National Union of Teachers, the National Association of Trades Councils, and Brent, Camden and Hertfordshire public sector workers' UNISON.

Like Tuzla as a whole, the staff and students of the university are determined to preserve their centuries-long tradition as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural entity. Serbs and Croats hold prominent positions in the university and the 'ethnic mix' of students (which was never an issue before the war) is similar to that outside the university.

Aggressor

Paul Henderson reported that the rector of the university was most anxious to emphasise that 'the war in which they were involved was not a civil war, but a war against a fascist aggressor, in which Bosnia was defending itself against being broken down into ghettos of Muslim, Serb and Croat.'

Moreover, the rector pointed out, while the Serbian Chetniks

destroyed everything that isn't Serbian, the people of Tuzla 'consciously and deliberately preserve and even repair all religious and cultural property, Serb, Muslim and Croat.'

But the war has obviously created enormous problems for the students and staff of Tuzla university — 120 teachers left the university when the war broke out; faculty buildings have been destroyed and staff killed; faculties outside of Tuzla have been expropriated by the Chetniks; teachers survive on little (£7.50 a month) or no wages, often the only way of getting money is to sell personal possessions on the streets.

Malcolm Nichols from the National Union of Teachers said 'wages' often took the form of food parcels, some of which are supplied by the Norwegian Refugee Council and other big aid agencies. As Paul Henderson says, this must be one of the few useful things organised by the UN!

The university has also been subjected to a 'knowledge blockade' — cut off from all international scientific information that might help them to defend themselves; military duties are compulsory for male students and staff, students alternating monthly between fighting at the front and studying; many students live three to a room, the majority of their dormitories having been given over to refugees.

But despite these desperate problems, Paul Henderson says, that 500 students still graduated in the first year of war as did 20 PhD and 30 master's degree students — yet another illustration of the great spirit of resistance of the working people of Tuzla.

In addition to taking aid to the university, members of the NUT also delivered over 6 tons of aid to primary and various 'specialist'

high schools (i.e. mining, electro-technical, business and creative arts schools) in the Tuzla area.

Polly Henderson from Leicester NUT said that some schools she visited were damaged or used as barracks or refugee centres, and while a few of the schools had been newly painted and are well equipped with basics such as tables and chairs, there is a chronic lack of resources.

Needs

There is no electricity or light in the classrooms and no pens or paper. As Polly says, the 25 boxes of A4 paper given by Workers Aid is but a drop in the ocean when you consider the needs of thousands of pupils.

Schools are also in extreme need of textbooks; at one school with a thousand pupils there were 300 'early reading' books, two or three geography books, about a thousand miscellaneous books, and no reprographic equipment.

Moreover at one high school in Tuzla there is a ratio of 1,000 pupils to six modern computer terminals! Computers are unheard-of in primary schools, where the only piece of 'technology' seems to be an antiquated duplicator called a 'Banda machine'.

Nevertheless, despite the acute material shortages and the ongoing anxieties arising from having fathers and husbands fighting at the front, and of course the deep emotional scars wrought by the massacre of so many young people on 25 May, teachers and pupils carry on with their ordinary daily lives as far as possible — the children eager to attend school, and the teachers resolute in their determination to maintain a good standard of education and to provide school meals to those kids in most need.

Polly Henderson said that

while the continuing provision of aid was obviously important, the building of personal links and solidarity with people was even more so. She told me that she will try to open lines of communication between children and parents in Leicester — many of whom generously donated money and food for the convoy — and those in Tuzla.

But whilst the preservation of education is crucial to the future of Bosnian society, as Billy Pye — formerly of the National Union of Mineworkers executive committee — and Tony Myers of Workers Aid both stressed, if the people of Tuzla are to escape their dependence on humanitarian aid and rebuild their lives, it is the regeneration of factories and industries that is most important, and it is the coal mining industry of Tuzla that is the key to this.

Visiting coal-mines underground and speaking to many miners, Billy said these workers — who gave so generously to the British miners' strike during 1984-85 and whose fathers had been the backbone of the Partisan movement against fascism during World War II — were deeply upset by the lack of international support.

They simply could not believe that a large section of the British labour movement could not differentiate between the Serbian nationalist perpetrators of fascist 'ethnic cleansing' and the desperate fight of the Bosnian people to preserve their deeply-rooted multi-ethnic society.

Billy Pye told me that it had taken him almost a week to speak of his experience in Tuzla without crying. In the most desperate of conditions people were trying to retain their dignity and live normal lives.

Tuzla's two deep mines are at present 'mothballed' — retained

on the barest maintenance; although the pits have modern machines they have broken down and need spare parts.

Billy has come back with a whole list of parts needed, not least of which is methane and carbon monoxide safety equipment.

Some open-cast mines have been reopened in the areas outside Tuzla, and it is from these sites that miners open coal faces with pickaxes and highly dangerous home-made explosives, supplying the lignite 'brown coal' that provides 30 per cent of Bosnia's power supply.

Brian Avey (the main convoy-driver from the Brighton and Hove Bus and Coach Co.) and Jim O'Sullivan told me that 75 per cent of miners are at the front, leaving 25 per cent of workers turning out 10 per cent of the pre-war production levels.

Unfortunately there is not enough room here to discuss the women's groups in Tuzla and their need for outside help, nor the old people's homes — nor the lack of information getting through to Tuzla.

Phones

People cannot use their own phones to make international calls; they have to use one of three phones in an outlying district. And there are hospitals and clinics that are desperately short of even the most basic equipment: antibiotics, analgesics, and so on.

Many convoy participants mentioned the warmth and generosity of Tuzla's people to them — and the lack of water, which only runs for an hour a day.

And much more could be said of the important work of solidarity carried on by trade unionists on the convoy, and the attempts of Tuzlan workers to rebuild their war-shattered trade unions.

Bangladesh tragedy

• FROM FRONT PAGE

and Tk10,000 (£160) of treatment for each of the badly injured workers. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia prayed for the peace of the departed souls.

Leaders of the National Garment Workers' Federation of Bangladesh, speaking at a demonstration and rally on 11 August blamed the owners of the Lusaka and Faa Apparels for the deaths. The union staged a demonstration in front of the Chief Factory Inspectorate building on 16 August.

They reject the inquiry committee announced by the labour minister on the grounds that without representation of the workers such an inquiry is aimed at bluffing the workers.

Campaign

The union is in the midst of a campaign for the legal right to Friday off each week. Narendra Sarkar, a worker from Sajib Garments, has been killed during the campaign and the union demand the immediate arrest and punishment of her killers.

In a letter to Workers Press, Amirul Haque Amin, the union's general secretary says:

'The campaign is running effectively. The response from the workers and the peoples is good. Day by day it is becoming stronger. Some workers have been victimised for the cause by the owners.'

Amin has sent an appeal. The union needs leaflets, posters and full time campaigners. 'We need material co-operation from "workers international". Please try with all your heart and soul.'

The International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign appeals for donations to: 'ITUSC Bangladesh Garment Workers Solidarity Fund'. Please send your cheques/postal orders to ITUSC, PO Box 12, Barking IG11 7UJ, Britain. Receipts will be sent.

Sarajevo slaughter

THE United Nations was clutching desperately at its tattered reputation after Serb nationalist forces mortar-bombed a crowded marketplace in Sarajevo, killing 37 people and wounding 88. Several children were among the victims.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

The 120mm mortar shell which landed among them was no stray shot, but part of a barrage aimed at the Trznica market area from Serb-held positions. Serb forces are the only ones with the type of ordnance used. Nevertheless, the UN forces' immediate response was to send soldiers out studying the shell craters to ascertain where the shells came from.

They were still deliberating as shells hit the Kosevo hospital where the wounded had been taken, and continued shelling took the lives of more children. Eventually UN officers announced the startling news that it had been Serb forces that were responsible.

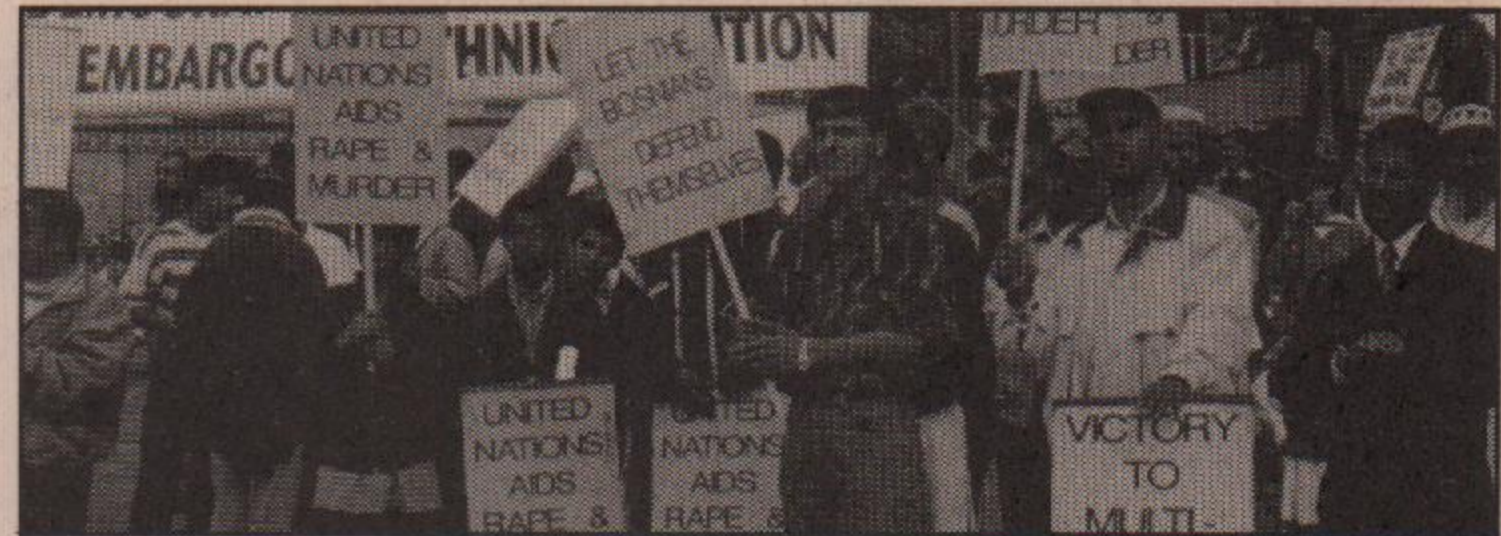
This procrastination, contrasting with the way UN officials seldom wait for evidence before condemning alleged Bosnian actions, is part of the UN's deference to Serb-nationalist propaganda. Canadian UN General Lewis Mackenzie became a paid Serb lobbyist claiming that Muslims killed their own people to gain world sympathy.

After the 5 February 1994 mortar attack on Sarajevo mar-

ketplace killing 60 people, Chetnik leader Radovan Karadzic said the carnage was faked. Belgrade officials claimed it had been caused by a landmine set off by the Bosnians themselves. Later they just said it wasn't possible to establish where the mortar was fired from.

Action had to be delayed last week while the great powers got on with plans to carve-up Bosnia. Clinton's envoy Richard Holbrook said the slaughter would not stop 'the peace process', while Tory aid minister Baroness Chalker insisted 'there can be no military solution to this conflict'. So much for the 'Rapid Reaction Force'!

The 16-nation Lancaster House conference on 21 July was a costly propaganda stunt. A television journalist fed up with the repeated one-angled shot of Major making his 'get tough' speech, discovered the Foreign Office had barred BBC and ITN. One private television company, Evolution TV, was admitted, with



Bradford protest supporting Bosnia last Saturday

instructions to film Major, Defence Minister Michael Portillo, and Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, and ignore other participants.

As Bosnian Muslims were being bulldozed into mass graves at Srebrenica, the Tories declared they would 'draw a line' to save Gorazde, the last UN 'safe haven' in eastern Bosnia. But British troops have been withdrawn from Gorazde ahead of schedule. Two Bosnians were killed trying to enter their compound in search of petrol or weapons.

Cynical

It was different in June when the Welsh Fusiliers were disarmed and taken hostage by the Chetniks, but then their orders were different. Some British soldiers feel almost as cynical about British government deviousness as the Bosnians, if not yet as bitter.

The London conference was told the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) would reopen access to Sarajevo.

For some time now the only supplies reaching the Bosnian capital came over Mount Igman,

on the route secured despite UN opposition by the Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH) Army. The road is exposed to Chetnik gunfire in places, and the Bosnians lack armoured vehicles or the artillery to retaliate.

It was reported in June that troops of the Devon and Dorset regiment, and 19 Field Regiment Royal Artillery, had been ordered to defend the route, but the orders were countermanded from Whitehall.

After the London conference, as Labour's shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook has pointed out, television pictures showed UNPROFOR troops including British artillery moving on to Mount Igman, supposedly to protect the aid route.

What they didn't show was General Rupert Smith, UNPROFOR's British commander, reaching an agreement with General Mladic, the Serb Chetnik commander. Labour MP John Home Robertson, planning to deliver supplies to Sarajevo with Edinburgh Direct Aid, has had a letter from Portillo, warning them not to try the Igman route.

'Should you decide to travel

Tories and Stalinists stand by Chetniks

over Mount Igman, you could be putting your own lives at risk. In addition you could jeopardise the agreement between the UN and the Bosnian Serb army over the Kiseljak route.' The Kiseljak route is longer, and under Chetnik control.

When Malcolm Rifkind was Minister of Defence he appointed David Hart, who advocated full support for the Serb Chetniks, as a special adviser. Hart, whose only known operational experience was against the National Union of Mineworkers from 1984-5, is also a close friend and influence on Portillo.

Despised for his anti-working class policies as Employment Secretary, Portillo finds allies for his appeasement of nationalist Serbs. 'Britain slams Croatia over ethnic cleansing' was how the 'Morning Star' headlined the Tory minister's rush to judgement on 8 August.

Stalinists have been writing letters to the press defending poor Serbia against 'media bias', 'Croat fascism' and 'Muslim reaction', oblivious to the fact that the Orthodox Chetniks are as bitterly anti-communist as anti-Muslim.

Like the BBC, the 'Morning Star' persistently refers to Bosnians as 'the Muslims'. It supports the Tory government's insistence on keeping the arms embargo on Bosnia. Under the heading 'Labour rattles Bosnian sabre' (25 August), it reported Robin Cook saying Labour found it 'difficult to continue backing Tory and UN policies. If the 'Morning Star' has no such difficulty, it's time it did.

China murders its prisoners to 'maintain social order' for UN Women's Conference

Comment by Mick King in the Far East

HARRY WU, recently 'deported' from China, is right to oppose Hillary Clinton's decision to attend the United Nations Women's Conference due to be held in Beijing in September.

Wu was arrested by the Chinese authorities as he was attempting to gather information on a prison system that's notorious for enslaving inmates to pro-

duce cheap export goods. Wu was sentenced to 15 years but was immediately expelled as he is a US citizen.

Wu is right in his understanding of the regime's intention to use this conference and the non-governmental forum held there last month, as validation for its practices.

Some preparations for these two events shed light on the intentions of the Chinese authorities:

In August, 16 people were ex-

ecuted and a further ten sentenced to death in Beijing. Their alleged crimes were murder, rape, gun-running and kidnapping.

'Executions are necessary to maintain social order during the UN Women's Conference,' said the official Chinese news media.

Elite city police have had to take a special oath to uphold law and order. Taxi drivers have been instructed to spy on their passengers and have had to attend special courses costing 500 yuan (about \$6) before they could work during the conference.

All demonstration are to be quickly put down. Foreign delegates are to be watched in case they try to spread dissent. All Chinese delegates have been briefed on how to deal with awkward questions and criticisms.

It is in these ways that the Chinese ganster regime hopes to control the lives of the 1 to 2 billion people that come under its shadow. The authorities know that despite US bleatings about 'human rights' it wants China as an ally in Asia.

Meanwhile the issue of state-sponsored infanticide is unlikely to get much airing, along with rape, torture or ethnic cleansing in Tibet.

The proposed tax on foreign oil companies in Tibet has just been reduced by 90 per cent. But companies are reluctant to invest in Tibet in the light of the politically and socially explosive situation there.

'Cat and mouse' execution threat in Indonesia

BY COLIN PENDLETON

SEVEN men are facing execution in Indonesia, where the Suharto dictatorship is playing a 'cat and mouse' game with prisoners' lives and the rights of the people.

Although Justice Minister Oetjo Oesman would not divulge names, the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign (Tapol) has been told that two of those due for execution are political prisoners who have already spent 30 years in jail.

Sergeant-Major Marsudi and Sergeant-Major Bungkus were both arrested in October 1965, after General Suharto's military junta took power. They were convicted by military courts on charges relating to the kidnap of seven generals during the abortive coup that provided Suharto's pretext for his own coup.

Justice Minister Oesman announced the executions on 17 August, the 50th anniversary of Indonesia's declaration of independence, and just 24 hours after the release of three other political prisoners, which was publicised in the Indonesian and international media to show the regime's supposed liberalisation.

These were more senior figures — former foreign minister Dr Subandrio, 81, Air Marshal Omar Dani, 71, and former intelli-

gence chief Brigadier General Sugeng Sutarto, 75, — all arrested in 1966. When their clemency was announced government ministers made a point of stressing that these three were 'not communists'.

Among those remaining under sentence of death, besides the two sergeant-majors, are three convicted of trying to restore the banned Indonesian Communist Party: Sukatno, who was general-secretary of the party youth organisation when he was arrested in 1968, Isnanto arrested in 1969, and Asep Suryaman, arrested in 1971 and convicted in 1975.

Shot

The trade union leader Munir was shot by firing squad in May 1985, and since then there have been 22 executions of prisoners accused either of involvement in the 1965 events or in the Communist Party. Asep Suryaman was among six prisoners taken from their cells on 4 March 1990, and told they were to be executed. The executions then were halted after demonstrations in Amsterdam on the eve of a visit by the Dutch overseas development minister.

More than a million ex-political detainees ('tapols') still have the letters 'ET' on their identity

card, which affects them and their families' ability to get work or benefits. On 7 August it was announced that new identity cards would not be so marked, but the Security Ministry said it was 'not letting down its guard' and would continue 'monitoring activities of these former detainees'.

Indonesian human rights campaigners are appealing to supporters to write to the Indonesian government, urging it to spare the lives of Bungkus and Marsudi, and to grant amnesty to the five 1965 death-sentence prisoners and 19 others mostly serving life-sentences, so they can live out the remainder of their lives with their families.

Letters/faxes to: President Suharto, Istana Negara, Jalan Veteran, Jakarta. Via Jakarta Foreign Ministry fax: 62-21 385 7316.

Minister of Justice Oetjo Oesman, Jalan Rasuna Said Kav, 6-7 Jakarta Selatan. Phone/fax 62-21 310 4149 or 525 3095.

They also suggest calling on your own government or MPs to put pressure on Indonesia, and holding protests at Indonesian embassies.

Please send information of your actions to: PIJAR, Committee for the Defence and Release of Political Prisoners, phone/fax: 62-21 765 0772.

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