

Class struggle in South Africa

This is the text of a leaflet issued by South African Trotskyists in preparation for last Tuesday's stayaway action, called after the murder of a striker

STOP THE KILLING OF STRIKING WORKERS!

The Workers International condemns the brutal murder of striker A. Kilane by a security guard hired by Cape Gas. We are drawn any reaction from the ANC-Government of National Unity. We voted in a new government, but are still suffering under the same

anti-worker practices. Workers still get starvation wages and labour under terrible conditions. Workers still face police and other repression. This is not what we have fought for! The struggle of the workers continues! We fully support the call for a STAY-AWAY by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, and we support the union's demand for the firing of Cape Gas managing directors, the prosecution of the murdered, closure of Sea Point armed

response security guards and financial compensation for the Kilane family. In addition we demand:
■ The immediate scrapping of the lock-out clause!
■ Scrapping of disciplinary procedures against strikers!
■ Cape Gas must pay its workers a living wage!

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!!

We call on all workers to discuss the stayaway and to work out how best to support it. On Tuesday 23 August, workers will leave their workplaces to go to Com-

munity House (Salt River Rd) and will march from there to Cape Gas at 9am. In addition we call on all workers to continue the struggle for a society in which the working class and its fellow poor will control the government and the economy in the interest of society and not in the interest of profit.

Lastly, we wish to call on all workers to support the struggles of Kohler, Xactics and Golden Arrow Bus workers, who were dismissed a few years ago under apartheid, for strike action.

They must get their jobs back!
Nb 'Workers International News' (no 2) is now on sale at R1.00!
■ See back page.

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Labour MP lobbies for big business WHO WILL SPEAK FOR WORKERS?

It has been revealed that Labour MP Barry Sheerman, frontbench spokesperson on disabled rights, is also a director of a company lobbying for big business.

The company, called Made in the UK, which was formed in August this year, says its aim is 'to promote or propose bills in parliament and to inform members of both Houses of Parliament... on legislation (whether proposed or not), policy initiatives, proposed policy initiatives and other issues or matters relevant to manufacturing industry'.

BY BOB ARCHER

Many trades unionists and workers used to think that an organisation already existed for that purpose — the Labour Party. That was a party set up by the organised working class to represent parliament and oppose the interests which oppressed them. At times it was also intended to promote progressive legislation which improved health, education, safety at work and many other aspects of life.

cars to the company and the now private Yorkshire Electricity has donated office space. Sheerman's assistant, Peter Breen, denied that 'Made in Britain' clashed with Labour Party policies and added: 'Barry Sheerman's view is that not talking to people does not improve matters.'

Privilege

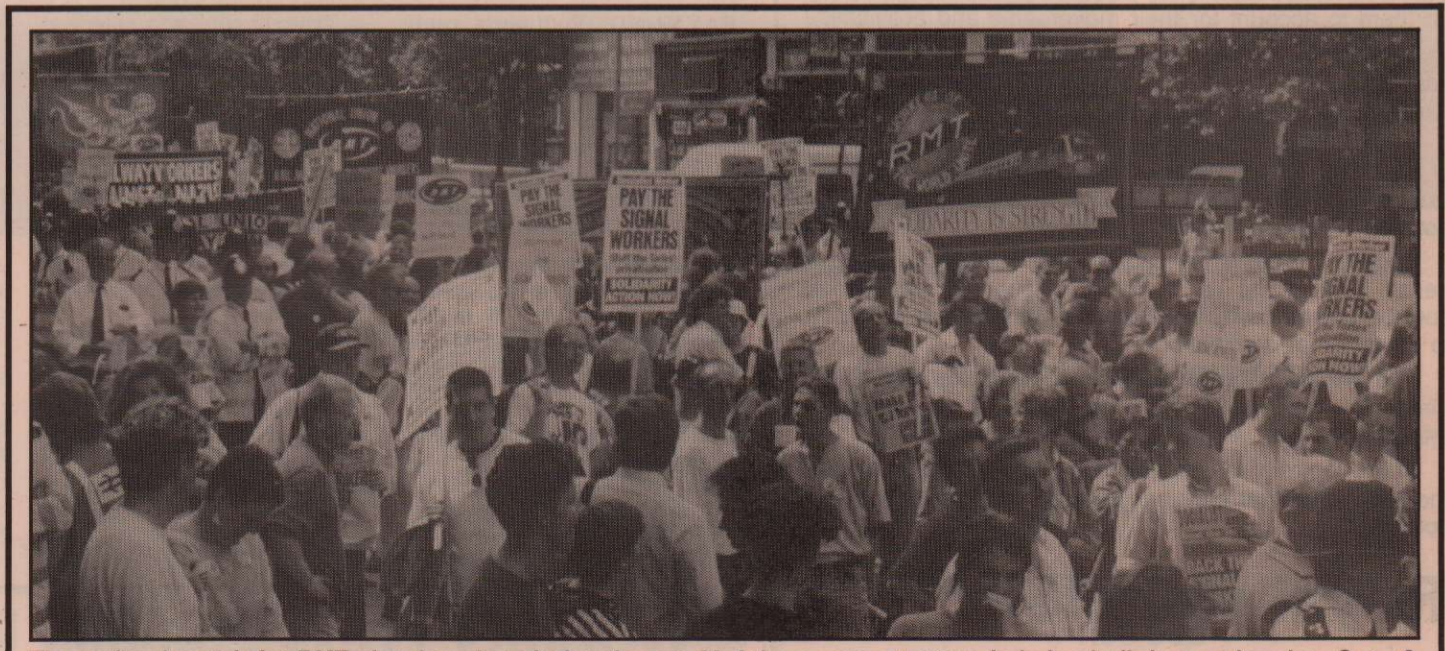
It certainly improves the bank balance to talk to people who are prepared to pay you generously for the privilege.

But remember the old adage: 'He who pays the piper calls the tune.'

Sheerman's effrontery is stupendous. Does he not even worry that by parading around as a Labour candidate he has attracted the votes of workers, the unemployed and their families who hoped he would represent their interests?

In fact he is closer to the likes of Hanson, a firm which specialises in buying up productive businesses and 'unbundling' them.

This is a process which involves ruthless asset-stripping. Profitable parts of the business are sold off for a quick profit. Others are closed down and the



The national march for RMT signal workers in London on 30 July: a support group is being built in east London. See p3

Obituary

The latest Bulletin (no 6) of Workers Aid for Bosnia contains the following obituary, which it printed not just for one person, but in memory of all the people of the former Yugoslavia who in one way or another have resisted the descent into barbarism and who have been destroyed by the war

In Memoriam Mirjana Dizdarevic (1955-94)

In a Yugoslavia torn apart by fascist barbarity I have only just learned of the death of my friend Mirjana several months ago. She was the founder and cornerstone of the Sarajevo Association in Paris. Another victim of this horrible war.

Behind the youthful appearance of this petite, modest young woman, kindness itself, well educated and yet self-effacing to the point of silence, was hidden the strong nature

of an indomitable fighter. In Paris she almost collapsed from fatigue after days and nights of ceaseless work which she took on quietly as her duty to Sarajevo, the city of her childhood, her youth, her loves.

Very sensitive, she had always loved classical music, which she had studied at the Academy of Sarajevo, and for a period presented Radio Sarajevo before the war. The cruel times demanded that she abandon all this to become a journalist and nurse, raising the

morale of her people in distress. Finally, two years after leaving Sarajevo, she had been able to return for a week. The shock was terrifying, she had a heart attack, and on her return to Paris she fell into a coma and never recovered consciousness. Twenty-four hours later she died.

I salute the memory of this valiant fighter for a united, multi-ethnic and democratic Bosnia in this war against the vile chauvinists. A war where Karadzic's fascists have surpassed all the horrors of modern times. The Bosnian working class will forever remember the names of its children — these courageous and honest intellectuals — their country's struggle for freedom. Radoslav P.

■ Copies of Bulletin No 6 are (price 10p) from Workers Aid for Bosnia, PO Box 9, Eccles SO, Salford M30

Workers Press

Backward step on right to silence

'THE complete abolition of the right to silence' is how the human rights organisation 'Liberty' describes the proposed new caution that police would have to read to suspects.

The changed version, which warns suspects that they 'do not have to say anything' but that it may be that silence 'strengthens the case against you', is in line with legal changes proposed in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill now back in front of the House of Commons.

A 'Liberty' spokesperson pointed out that 'the new caution will make it clear to anyone under interrogation that there is a powerful onus to speak'.

In other words the new 'caution' is designed to intimidate the 'suspect' and strengthen the hand of the police.

To smooth a path for the new Bill, a press campaign is being whipped up highlighting notorious assault cases. Police chiefs are quoted on how difficult it is to secure convictions.

(In fact overweening police confidence that the person they have 'nicked' is the guilty party, and the frequently dubious measures they take to get a guilty verdict, are major reasons why defendants need all the protection they can get.)

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill aims to give the state unfettered and dictatorial powers against the very substantial group of people who know from experience that the law and the police operate not for them but against them.

It will strengthen the already considerable legal powers to break up strikes by dispersing pickets, interfering with their right to travel round the country and show solidarity with other workers' struggles.

It is therefore above all a class measure inspired by ruling-class hatred of the working class and all those in the 'lower orders' who have got out of the habit of tugging their forelocks to authority.

It gives police new powers to terrorise travellers who have either opted out or been driven out of a settled existence.

It makes it easier for the police to crush the activities of hunt saboteurs, making trespass a much more severe offence. This will also affect squatters.

It enables the police to harry organisers of rave parties and obstruct their right to passage along the highway.

It weakens the rights of environmental and other protest groups, enabling the police to disrupt their work and bring pressure on activists.

It adds to the already enormous pressure on refugees, migrants, black people and other ethnic minority groups.

The new 'caution' gives the police great scope to 'go fishing', pulling people in on suspicion and putting the onus on them to account for their movements and activities.

The home secretary's attempts to paint a picture of society on the verge of being overwhelmed by lawless elements raises two questions.

First, if it is at all accurate, we must ask whether the kind of society in which we live today can last long at all, if extraordinary measures need to be taken to protect the population against itself.

Secondly, what is the cause of all this alleged lawlessness? Does it not lie in the domination of capital over society? Are not the real criminals those who stop at nothing to sustain that domination?

The struggle against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill must unite all those people it is seeking to intimidate.

At the centre of the campaign must be the working class, the only force that can lead the way to a new, socialist, society.

Royal rumbles

'YOU cannot be serious. I don't even know how to use a parking meter, let alone a phone box.' This is how the Princess of Wales attempted to counter the accusation that she had wandered around Kensington making nuisance telephone calls to a millionaire art-dealer friend of her estranged husband.

Many of us wish all the royal family would elect to exercise the right of silence on a permanent basis. In a world still reeling from the massacres in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, who on earth wants to see a single drop of printing ink wasted on a woman who is actually proud of being totally incompetent and aloof from day-to-day existence (not to mention her ineffable husband)?

But the dysfunctional shenanigans of the Windsor clan nevertheless have a message for those of us who do have to master pay-phones, bootlaces and other such drab practicalities.

A profound crisis of imperialism isn't just something visible 'over there', in Africa and south-eastern Europe. It is connected with a deep degeneration in the ruling class here.

The royals are worthy representatives of a sick class.

Letters

WE WELCOME LETTERS
SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS,
PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB
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Two clarifications on former Yugoslavia

THE journalistic summary ('No compromise possible in Serbian-Bosnian war', 30 July) of the long discussion on the Serbian situation that I had with the editorial comrades of Workers Press is certainly the least satisfactory way of handling the matter.

For, in addition to problems of oral translation, such inevitably brief and meagre notes about intricate problems — where every shade of meaning carries some weight — give the impression of a string of categorical assertions, unexplained and without the elaboration that would enable Workers Press readers to understand the real situation.

I myself am partly responsible. An interview, or an article by me, would have been much better. Pending an opportunity to return to the question in more detail, I should like to correct two points.

As regards the Balkan situation as a whole — for long the chief international problem, in which all the factors within the Balkans (Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria . . .) are, like those outside the Balkans (European Union, US, Russia, United Nations . . .), closely interwoven in a contradictory and conflicting way — the article gave the impression that I was making forecasts in a simplistic manner.

Now, in the Balkans today, as everywhere else, prophecy is tantamount to charlatany. I am even less skilled at political speculation. That I live in Serbia gives me still less right to claim to see the whole picture, for those in the midst of turmoil or war, while fitting together a host of daily facts that fall within their sight and hearing, are less able to analyse the whole picture than those outside.

Thus it is amazing to see how many participants in World War II, on different sides, have still

not grasped the essential character of that war half a century later, though they can tell you their recollections of it for days on end.

There are too many unknown factors involved in the former Yugoslavia for anyone, Marxist or not, to be able to declare with certainty that this or that will happen. Quite simply, as Marxists, we can and must try to see further, to analyse the trends in the class struggle as it exists now, so as to prepare, organise and equip the working class politically for the future.

Our role is not to speculate on what the imperialists, small and large, will or will not agree on for the former Yugoslavia. We start from the interests of the entire working class as the only valid criterion for diplomatic agreements, military tactics, and social reforms.

THUS, as regards Macedonia being 'now a US military base', a totally false conclusion could be drawn as to our position.

Macedonia has been disarmed by Serbia, which has recovered the military arsenal of the old federal army, while rendering the non-mobile elements (airports, radar, etc.) unusable.

Macedonia woke up to find itself, like Bosnia, stripped absolutely bare on all its borders: without an army, without equipment, without anything. At the same time it had to endure strong diplomatic pressure, military provocations, and economic embargoes from its neighbours, the Serb and Greek petty imperialists, who in the collective nationalist hysteria, deny the Macedonian people the right even to their name.

So the weak authority of

[Macedonian President] Gligorov, like that of [Bosnian President] Izetbegovic, falls little by little into dependence on the US. Can you blame someone who is the prey of two bandits for seeking the help of a third?

Washington, for its part, has every interest in putting down roots in Macedonia, the junction-point of intense conflicts threaten US interests in the region. So it has sent officers, experts, advisers, observers.

Therefore the shorthand expression 'US military base', which was used in the Workers Press article, is wrong, because exaggerated.

In these few lines I am not seeking to explain the intricate Macedonian problem, but to criticise this simplistic phrase in reference to it.

MY OTHER clarification concerns the anti-war group in Belgrade. While it is a politically diverse mixture with a common programme, this group contains those who are at present the most honest and bravest among the Serbian people.

We Trotskyists support them unconditionally in their fight against this dirty war in Bosnia. I have many criticisms of them, but I also have respect for them.

So I am neither the originator of, nor do I subscribe to, that scornful description 'collective psychotherapy group' flung in their direction by one of their own supporters, rather disappointed by their having marked time for the past two years.

Still less do I suggest that this group should become the Serbian 'Petofi Circle'. That would amount to sticking bits of history together in the manner of a cubist collage.

The upsurge of the Hungarian working class in 1956 caused the intellectuals boldly to call in question the whole Rakosi regime from a socialist standpoint, discarding all taboos, carrying with them the student youth, and thus creating

New Trotsky journal

THAT the readings of Trotsky are still relevant to today's struggles is born out by the appearance of the 'Journal of Trotskyist Studies', published by the Institute of East European Studies at Glasgow University.

Number two is bigger and better than number one and includes a translation by Brian Pearce of a lengthy piece written in 1907 and called 'In Defence of the Party'.

I was particularly impressed

hard way that, as between the Allies and the Japanese imperialists, it was not even a matter of 'six of one and half-a-dozen of the other', switched their alliance to our camp.

True, having won independence for their country that way, they eventually installed the oppressive regime which now rules Burma — but that's another story, like the conflicts post-war in Indonesia and Indo-China mentioned by Challinor.

In my letter I pointed out that, without D-Day, western Europe would have either remained under Hitler's boot or fallen under Stalin's.

Challinor does not comment on the latter possibility which existed in 1944.

After all, I suppose, Stalin, while exterminating French Trotskyists, would have nationalised the means of production in France.

Brian Pearce
New Barnet, Herts

'Third Period' revisited

RAYMOND Challinor's reply (30 July) to my letter of 16 July brings back memories of a period earlier than World War II, the so-called 'Third Period'.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Communists said that there was no point in defending 'bourgeois democracy' against fascism.

Indeed, fascism had already arrived in Germany years before Hitler took power, so why all the fuss about taking special measures to prevent a Nazi victory?

Didn't the governments of Brüning and Schleicher rule by emergency decree? What could Hitler do worse than that?

They learnt.
In the Far East the Burmese nationalists, having learnt the

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

Make a push for the August fund!
Following a Summer break we are really just starting to collect our August fund, and there is a lot of ground to catch up.

Workers Press editor Mike Cooke has been with a convoy to Bosnia. Our South African comrades are active in the big strike movement. Our suppliers don't seem to understand it's a 'holiday season'. Bills keep rolling in as usual. So please make sure regular pledges are paid in promptly, then have another careful look to see what extra help you can give or get.

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

Coming soon

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 24-25 SEPTEMBER: 'Towards a Working Class Politics'. Coventry conference of the Revolutionary Socialist Network. Addresses major issues for socialists attempting to analyse the political situation in Britain and advance the workers' movement. The final session is intended to produce

practical results — both political and organisational. Contact for booking form: Dave Spencer, 17 Winifred Avenue, Earlsdon, Coventry CU5 6JT (tel: 0203 676614). Starts on the Saturday at 10.30am, Barras Green social club, Coventry Street, Coventry CV2 4NA. Cost £4/£1 unwaged.

the political ferment of the October revolution.
In spite of that élan and intellectual daring, they did not attain a party capable of leading the revolution.

Serbia, 40 years later, is disappointed in socialism through the barbaric abuse that the Serbian bureaucracy has made of it. Without any big idea about the future, the Belgrade group cling to fashionable ideological formulas (human rights, a state based on law, pluralism, tolerance . . . in order to keep going, but does not really believe in them.)

This internal impotence, together with strict surveillance by the authorities — who do not hesitate to burgle, threaten, and intimidate with fascist gangs — means their isolation has become a way of life.

They say nothing about the big problems — socialism, privatisation, Church attempts to muscle in on the schools, Kosovo, the situation of the working class — since there is a danger of internal cleavages and external repression.

The Saturday midday meetings are deliberately closed to any discussion. The students do not turn up. The group's leaders often go abroad, to Vienna and Paris, but they are never seen in the Serbian provinces.

The group confines itself to individual statements. There is no question of any political resolution whatever, however limited, drawing the whole of the group into a common and coordinated field of activity.

As to consistent organisational work, it is better for me to say nothing about it. Separated from the working class, as many parties flourish as there are individual intellectuals.

So our objective, or wish, is not to manufacture an artificial 'Petofi Circle' — as the report might suggest — but to re-establish the independent strength and consciousness of the Serbian working class, so that all the intellectuals' energy, talent, culture and boldness shall find their true expression, and not to summon up this disgraceful image of 'group psychotherapy'.

R. Pavlovic
Serbia

by Trotsky's attacks on those who sought the way forward by a split.

On page 88 he asks the question: 'Does the way out really lie through a split, and not through a system of tireless compromises, each of which is a step towards unity in the class struggle?'

On page 89 he adds: ' . . . but seeking the way out through split is like cutting off one's head in order not to comb one's hair'.

And on page 90 he talks about 'this crime against the Russian Revolution and the international proletariat'.

When will we ever learn?
John P. Mathieson
Glenrothes, Fife

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Bus deregulation means profit before safety

BY PETER GIBSON

THE effect of the deregulation of bus services on safety standards on the buses is now a major problem.

The Yellow Bus Company in Hull was refused an extension of its operator's licence from three buses to four at a recent hearing in front of the local traffic commissioner.

In the last 19 months, three of Yellow Bus's vehicles had been given prohibition notices because of faults that made them unsafe.

One of its 12-seater buses was taxed as a private vehicle rather than as a Hackney Carriage. It displayed no tax disc.

Midland Choice Travel has had its 4-bus operator's licence reduced.

In Manchester, the traffic commissioner reduced the length of another

company's licence because its buses had had nine prohibition notices in two years.

TAJ Coaches of Walsall was called to appear before the Birmingham traffic commissioner because of a complaint about its insurance. The firm did not show up.

The same traffic commissioner has suspended Banga Travel's operator's licence. Of the firm's five buses, one blew up its engine on the way to be tested; others had defective tyres and loose batteries.

Charges

Three drivers for A. Wray and Sons, and the company, appeared before the Harrogate magistrates to face charges of not keeping proper records of driving hours.

All 12 of the firm's drivers face similar allegations, and the company is ac-

cused of permitting 27 of the alleged offences. However, the magistrates ruled there was no case to answer.

This picture of unsafe vehicles and tired drivers has even reached the South East Region of the TUC (SERTUC), whose transport committee has welcomed the House of Lords amendments to the Deregulation Bill which would mean more bus companies losing their operator's licence for breaches of drivers' hours regulations.

The committee said it had had reports of 236 coaches checked by Department of Transport officials on the M5 motorway. Fifty per cent of them were found to have defects.

It also had a report on the crash of a coach on the M2 motorway in Kent where nine passengers and the driver were killed.

In that case it was reported that the speed limiter had been disconnected, the brakes were defective, and the driver

had breached the drivers' hours regulations.

SERTUC has made a call for the enforcement of the regulations to protect both passengers and drivers.

Standards

Mick Connolly, SERTUC secretary, said: 'Safety standards were laid down to protect the lives of drivers and passengers. If they are not enforced, the lives of all will be put in jeopardy.'

The result of 'market forces' is to do just that. No sentiment in business means no one's safety may be allowed to get in the way of making a profit.

If the law gets in the way of making a profit, then the law must be changed, say the employers.

The effects of this are now clear for all to see.

But our lives are more important than their profits.

Parkside pit camp closes

THE women's camp fighting against the closure of Parkside colliery in Lancashire closed down last weekend.

A small group of very determined women and their supporters had sustained the camp for 20 months.

They fought to stop the contractors from closing the pit down and they faced legal injunctions, eviction by bailiffs and the award of legal costs against them.

Now the stone that will be poured down the mineshaft to block it for ever is on site, despite their long struggle, and the conveyors that are to deliver it in a 48-hour continuous process are in position.

Masses of electrical, electronic and mechanical equipment has simply been abandoned underground.

Last

'We know the pit is beyond redemption now', Berni Cavanagh told Workers Press last week. 'This was the last coal mine in Lancashire.'

'Nobody in Lancashire will ever go down a mineshaft again.'

The camp wound up last Saturday night with a rally. Some of the speeches will be printed in future issues of Workers Press.

The campaign still continues its appeal fund to cover legal costs faced by Sylvia Pye, singled out by the courts as one of the main organisers of the camp.

So far donations have come not only from Britain but also abroad, including US mineworkers.

Cheques payable to the Sylvia Pye National Appeal Fund should be sent to Berni Cavanagh, Common Road Nurseries, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 9JJ.

E. London supports signal workers

BY MARTIN WESTWOOD

IF WE hold our nerve we can grasp a complete victory. We have a choice — either we stand firm or we allow the bosses to smash effective trade unionism,' said signalworkers' union leader Peter Skelly, at a meeting called by activists and trade unionists in east London last Wednesday to support the signal workers.

Skelly, who is a national executive member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), detailed the productivity sacrifices already made by signal workers:

'There used to be 121 signal boxes between King's Cross and Edinburgh, there are now three. There has been a 47 per cent increase in productivity since 1984. Since 1986 we have suffered a 30 per cent loss of signalworkers' jobs.'

Sacrifices

Contrasting the sacrifices made by his members with the greed of the Railtrack bosses, he explained that it had cost £66 million to set up Railtrack and £7 million to do up their new offices.

'It would cost £9 million to settle this claim,' he said.

Bitterly critical of the Labour Party's failure to support the signalworkers, Skelly warned that if the Labour Party abandoned the working class it would never be elected again.

Calling for support from the Labour movement, he demanded that resolutions be sent to the TUC in support of the strike, financial



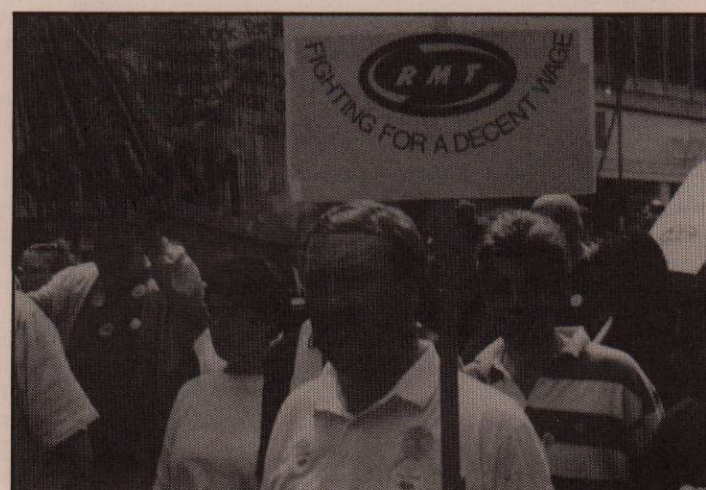
Tower Hamlets trades council and Newham council workers from east London joined the recent RMT march in London

assistance be given to strikers, and trades unionists should join the march of signal workers and Arrowsmith strikers at the opening of this year's TUC.

The meeting planned activities in east London for the next two weeks.

These include public collections at a number of tube stations and the production and distribution of leaflets.

■ A commitment was also given to build for the next meeting of the support group, which is to take place on Monday 5 September at 7.30pm at the British Rail Staff Club, Angel Street, Stratford, east London.



Obituary: John Young

WORKERS PRESS reports with deep regret the death at 41 of John Young, a former member of the Workers Revolutionary Party in south-west London.

John became a subscriber to Workers Press in the early 1970s following a door-to-door canvassing campaign on the Roehampton council estate where he lived.

The paper at that time was published daily by the Socialist Labour League (SLL). In 1974,

when many workers, intellectuals and young people turned to Trotskyism during the struggle against the Heath government and especially the anti-trade union Industrial Relations Act, the SLL founded a new organisation, the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP).

John joined the new party at its founding conference and became very active in the Putney branch.

People who worked with him closely at the time

emphasise that his interest in politics was very strong indeed and that he was always keen to confront profounder political questions.

Like many others, John found it impossible to stay in the WRP in the late 1970s and he dropped out of activity.

In 1985 he learned of the expulsion of WRP leader Gerry Healy on charges of violence and slander against and sexual abuse of party members. John rejoined the WRP and worked

enthusiastically for it. He attended the conference in Budapest in 1990 which founded the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International.

John later developed disagreements with the direction the WRP and the Workers International were taking, and again dropped out of the party.

We deeply regret his death and sympathise with his family and his partner, Derek, for their loss.

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From last year's coal campaign

Inside left

Skirting the truth

THAT woman in Tuzla has turned up again! Not one of the many refugees from Serb fascists' 'ethnic cleansing', nor the district trades unions' secretary I met there, nor the young women serving with local Bosnian forces. A 'Guardian' report last year quoted a woman in the town complaining that Muslim refugees had sworn at her when she went out in a mini-skirt.

The 'Guardian's' Yigal Chazan said Tuzla people feared that embittered refugees from the countryside might alter their town's modern, secular culture. Tuzla is a mining and industrial area with a working-class political tradition. At the last elections people voted for the Social Democrats and their allies.

When the Spartacist League's 'Workers Hammer' (September/October 1993) cited the woman who'd been sworn at by refugees, I remarked on its ability to overlook thousands of horrific rapes and tortures committed by Serb fascists by its focusing on this case ('Desperate Liars', Inside Left, 9 October 1993). I said the Sparts weren't worried about what made people go to refugees, or drove them towards religious extremes.

Almost a year later, the unfortunate woman who can't go out in her mini-skirt has turned up again, in the US Spartacist League's paper 'Workers Vanguard', which claims Workers Aid for Bosnia is running supplies for the bourgeois-nationalist Bosnian Muslim regime, with British and French imperialist troops riding shotgun. 'What's Behind "Workers Aid for Bosnia"', 'Workers Vanguard' 5 August).

This time, Muslim refugees aren't mentioned. Instead, alleging Serb villages around Tuzla 'have been razed to the ground' and Serbs driven out of the town, 'Workers Vanguard' asserts that 'the predominant political force there is now the Muslim nationalist Party of Democratic Action'. (And to think Tuzla citizens are awaiting the outcome of elections!) 'Pointing to the growing presence of Islamic extremists', 'Workers Vanguard' goes on, 'one Tuzla woman complained: "I can't wear a mini-skirt in the street without them swearing at me". . . . Yes, it's her again. Clearly, the Sparts are hard up for hard facts about Bosnia, let alone arguments for their cowardly, hate-filled smears against the Bosnian working class.'

'WORKERS Vanguard' refers to a convoy report-back 'conference in London' (it was in Manchester, but perhaps they're as ignorant of northern England as of northern Bosnia); it says Workers Press regularly runs banner headlines reading "Timex to Tuzla" seeking a link a defeated Timex strike in Scotland to the Bosnian mining community which is the recipient of their campaign'.

That was last year. The locked-out Timex workers did support the first convoy, which was launched from Dundee. And since the Sparts, like 'International Workers Bulletin', have accused Workers Aid of running supplies for the Bosnian government, it's nice of them to admit that the supplies went to miners in Tuzla!

The more aid the international working class gets to embattled Bosnian workers, the more we help them resist reactionary political pressures within Bosnia, as well as Serb Chetnik and Croat Ustashi fascist aggression. The more the working-class movement takes on such international tasks, the more its muscle will grow to finish off fascism everywhere.

Charlie Pottins

Lambeth council ends

CALA to the co

At the end of July, Lambeth council in south London withdrew its grant from the Caribbean, African and Latin American Centre (CALA), a leading refugee community organisation in the borough. This was the culmination of a long history of indifference and hostility on the part of Lambeth council to the needs of black people in the borough. Workers Press spoke to CALA's administrator, MIKE RAHMAN, about this withdrawal of grant and its consequences

WP: What was CALA and why was it set up?

MR: We set up CALA in 1985. The idea was to bring together refugees and migrants, whether they were from Africa or Latin America. We brought people together who had a common history of exploitation and oppression in an effort to provide them with technical skills in order to get decent jobs or further their education.

We brought people together to talk about their problems. But also we needed to get people to work together on a day-to-day basis, learning together and sharing experiences. So we set up this training centre.

People remained within their given structures. We had to go through all of this until people's life-experiences showed them that it was necessary to come together.

It was at the end of 1989 that we moved to our present premises. We then launched the training aspect of our work, setting up a computer training centre.

In fact CALA has three projects. Apart from the computer training project, it has a legal advice unit and a research arm that tries to generate funds to subsidise our other activities. For example, we have just completed a major survey on HIV-AIDS awareness among Latin Americans in south-west London.

Our members and supporters give us donations and many volunteers come in here to assist us.

The idea was to be able to offer free training to refugees and migrants and other sections of the ethnic minority population in Lambeth and the surrounding area who would not otherwise have had a chance of gaining access to such training. This involved training in word processing and use of data

bases and spreadsheets. Our aim was to provide a level of training that took into account a person's cultural, linguistic and other background.

We have a centre that functions on a day-to-day basis with very little funding from the council. The council does not recognise the extent to which people are forced to organise themselves to provide services that ought properly to be provided by the state. There is no justice, no basic rights. People have to come here with their numerous problems — claims that people have not paid their poll tax, people threatened with deportation, etc. These people depend on this centre because other bodies such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux are being closed down.

We are trying to get away from a situation where, after six months being unemployed, people are sent away on 'training courses' that take no account of whether they like what they are doing or whether they will get a job. People are simply taken off the dole so that the figures will look better.

There is great pressure in the community to create conditions where people can take care of each other. We come from countries where there is a great sense of community. All this talk by the government about taking care of the community is a load of rubbish. The first thing the Conservatives and Liberals did in this borough was to cut the grant to community organisations that were already under-funded. [The council has been ruled by an alliance of Liberals and Tories since the recent elections.]

People are making a tremendous contribution to the delivery of services, ones that should have been provided by the local author-

ity. The time is coming when people are going to take action. Black people are not going to sit back and let the political parties take them for granted. They are going to organise among themselves to take political power in the borough.

Councillors were elected to carry out the wishes of the people but, along with the council officers, they have shown themselves to be inhuman.

WP: What have your relations with the council been like?

MR: We tried to get a grant from Lambeth council, the first time in 1990. It refused to grant one, claiming that the British Refugee Council in Brixton was offering training.

We asked that a feasibility study be carried out to find out what other needs were not being catered for, in order to expand our existing projects. We went to an open council meeting in 1990, when Labour was then in office. Anna Tapsell, now leader of the Labour group, was chair of the committee where we argued our case.

She accepted the officers' position. You can see how far back the Labour councillors were collaborating with the officer. They took the position of the officers lock, stock and barrel. We soon recognised that there was no point trying to convince the councillors. The people we needed to win over were the officers. We finally brought them down here and when they saw what we were actually doing they were convinced. They accepted that there was no need for a feasibility study.

They came up with the idea of a much wider survey over the whole borough — taking into account unemployment and other problems. At the time I was chair of the Lambeth Refugee Working Party. Although it was set up by the council, it refused to provide any funds. It was a 'quango' that tried to fool people into thinking that the council was really interested in the problems of refugees.

We had already decided in the working party that we should carry out a study to find out what was happening in the world of refugees, so that we could then force changes in council policies. So I offered to do a free pilot study.

We have had a long-running battle with the council over such things as the 'Premises Forum'. This aimed to put all the buildings in the borough in a register, including details such as location and what they could be used for. This would have provided information to anybody



The computer training project set up by

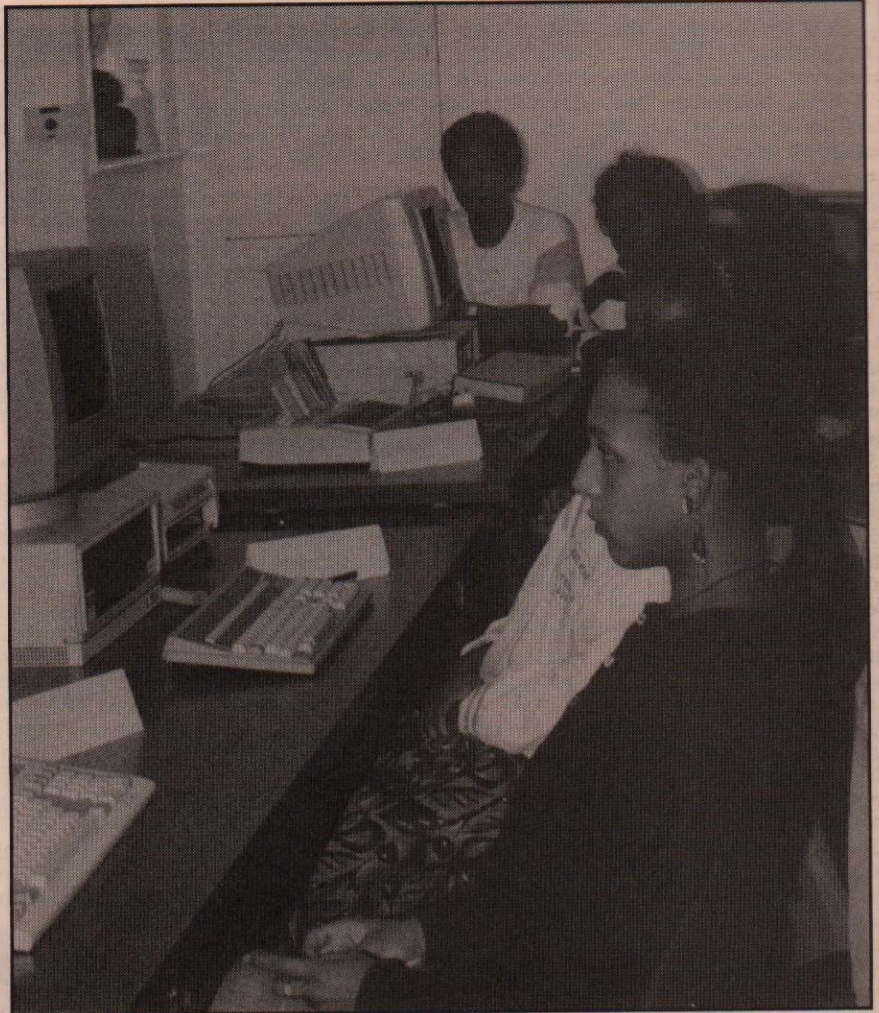


Local Labour MP Kate Hoey at the launch of the computer training project

who wanted to buy or rent such premises for their use. This was unilaterally closed down by the then Labour council.

Our present struggle is a political struggle. As community activists we are finding ourselves forced to challenge people who are supposed to be our allies; that is what Labour is supposed to be. This is

...s funding to refugee centre attempts unite community



Trainees at the CALA centre



CALA gives free training to refugees, migrants and others. The council used a technicality to stop the project's grant

why Labour lost the last election in the borough — they lost the support of people like us and our supporters.

WP: What happened to the study on refugees?

MR: We started to complain that it was our idea and that we had carried out the pilot study, but that the

council was not allowing us to get involved in it. Even now, after more than three years, we know nothing about what happened to it. We have written to the director and other junior officers and past councillors. We have not had a response: when you phone you get the ansaphone. When you write letters or faxes to them you get no reply.

The same with the councillors. This is a symptom of what is happening throughout the borough.

WP: What happened about CALA and what has led to the withdrawal of its grant?

MR: We finally got a grant for CALA, although we missed the first year's grant because of maladmini-

stration by the council. It took 15 months to give us our first payment and so we lost approximately £15,000. None of this has been taken into account by council officers or councillors.

The present issue arose over the ordering of computer equipment. I should point out that we were given three weeks to place this order, whereas the council had taken some 15 months to decide on the grant.

We commissioned someone to order the equipment. Since no one on CALA's management committee had the necessary expertise or time to supply the relevant invoices and purchase the equipment in such a short time.

We believe that council officers and councillors had simply decided to withdraw our grant. We believe that they have not acted fairly or

'The council does not recognise the extent to which people are forced to organise themselves to provide services that ought properly to be provided by the state.'

justly and have not taken the overall situation into account.

At no time did the person commissioned to purchase the equipment inform CALA's management committee that he was connected with a company and that his name appeared on one of the three invoices supplied to the council.

As soon as the management committee was officially informed by the council it immediately co-operated fully with the investigation.

The council also complained that not everything on the original invoice was actually purchased. This may have been true for a few small items of software because there were improvements there between asking for the equipment and actually making the purchases. But again there was no question of

corruption. The council officers complained that the grant liaison officer concerned had not been informed about these changes, which were in any case minor ones.

WP: Have you had a chance to answer these charges?

MR: In no way. CALA has been denied any right to see the report from the auditor that led to the withdrawal of the grant. Nor did we have the chance to see the officers' report that was placed before the council's environmental services committee, which took the decision to withdraw our grant. We were not even told that the report was coming to the committee. Nor have any of the relevant council officers discussed these matters with CALA.

In other words, all principles of natural justice have been broken. There was great pressure to stop me from even speaking to the committee meeting. The chair of that meeting, Councillor Cathy Ashley, granted me three minutes — a lot of which was lost because of interruptions by Conservative councillors.

WP: How do you see the future of this fight?

MR: The Conservatives and the Liberals have made clear that they will use their term of office to cut services even more drastically. The Liberals are trying to carry out the same sort of racist policies as they have in Tower Hamlets. But there is a lot of ferment in the borough and we are not going to tolerate it.

Black people are in a majority in this borough. We will force the council to commit itself to its equal opportunities policy and fight against any discriminatory legislation or policies that affect the black and ethnic minority communities at large.

A number of organisations have already expressed their support and have appealed on our behalf. We don't want to personalise this fight or to focus it just on CALA. We want to widen it. There will inevitably be further drastic cuts that will hit community organisations and that is why we want to widen the campaign.

There are serious battles to be fought; ours happened to be the first.

Standing up for what's right

THE central feature of the welcome second issue of the 'Journal of Trotsky Studies', just published, is the first English translation of Trotsky's 'In Defence of the Party' (1906-07).

Translated and edited by Brian Pearce, this early and hitherto little-known work runs to about 60,000 words.

A sort of pendant to Trotsky's 'Results and Prospects', it contains a number of letters and polemical pieces besides the article that gives it its name. One section quotes almost the whole of Karl Kautsky's 1906 article in 'Neue Zeit' on 'The Driving Forces of the Russian Revolution'.

From the remarkable vigour and passion of the writing — which I assume are reflected in and not embellished by Pearce's elegant translation — it is easy to see how Trotsky came to be nicknamed 'The Pen' by his readers. Just one example, which casts a vivid anticipatory light on Trotsky's later stand against Stalinism:

'My thinking is based on our Party as it actually exists. . . . I have in mind this Party, with all the tendencies and trends within it, with its internal differences and factional frictions, its mistakes and extremisms in the process of development, with all the maladies of its political growth.

'I have in mind . . . that real common cause which transforms all these trends and factions in the complex process of the fusion of socialism with the mass movement of the proletariat.

'Inside this Party I take up a definite position at each given moment. I stand up for what I think right and fight and fight against what I think mistaken.

'But in my inner-Party struggle I always feel beneath my feet the ground of common Party experience, based on the achievements and traditions of our Party.'

The sentence I have emphasised, written when he was 27, seems to me not only to sum up Trotsky's entire life and career — hence, I suppose, those references to his 'arrogance' and 'conceit' by individuals not worthy 'to unloose his shoe's latchet' — but also to describe rather well the sort of recruits that a revolutionary working-class party should strive to win to its ranks.

THERE is much else of interest in this second issue of the 'Journal of Trotsky Studies'.

I enjoyed Alan Wald's article on Trotsky's 'Literature and Revolution', sub-titled 'Leon Trotsky's contributions to Marxist cultural theory and literary criticism'.

Trotsky's work, according to Wald, shows both the authentic character of the liberating potential that was crushed by Stalinism, 'as well as the heroic legacy of an effort to defend artistic integrity on Marxist principles'.

Wald reminds us that what we know as 'Literature and Revolution' is only the first part of a longer work, whose second part consists of essays written between 1908 and 1914 which have not yet been translated into English.

Wald pays a generous tribute to Cliff Slaughter's 'Marxism, Ideology and Literature' (1980), which he calls 'a fine study of Trotsky's views on the relation between art and ideology'.

Andy Durgan's 'Trotsky, the POUM and the Spanish revolution', is a useful and extremely well-referenced summary, which concludes that, despite his lack of information ('or even the possession of "misinformation"'), 'much of Trotsky's general writings on Spain are highly perceptive'.

The book reviews include a short notice by Gerd Placke of Pierre Broué's 'Léon Sedov, fils de Trotsky' (1993), and a severe — over-severe, some may feel — appraisal of 'The Trotsky Reappraisal', edited by Terry Brotherton and Paul Dukes (1992).

PERSONAL COLUMN

Annual subscriptions (£5 for individuals) should be sent to: The Editors, 'Journal of Trotsky Studies', Institute of Russian & East European Studies, Glasgow University, 29 Bute Gardens, Glasgow G12 8RS, Scotland.

Clutching at a straw

A FEW weeks ago (16 July) I wrote that 'any sort of nonsense is repeated . . . in order to avoid acknowledging the Arab and African contributions to the development of music, including European music.'

Here's another example. Margaret Anne Doody, professor of English at Vanderbilt University, writes in the 'London Review of Books' (18 August) that 'The playing of the guitar so necessary to pop music comes from Spain, while the sliding string technique, universal now, comes from Hawaii'.

Well, yes, the guitar 'comes from Spain' in the immediate sense, but even so elementary a reference work as 'Pears Cyclopaedia' has, to its credit, caught up with the fact that this instrument 'was originally brought to Spain by the Moors'.

By 'the sliding string technique' Doody evidently means the trick of sliding a knife blade, or the broken-off and annealed top of a whisky bottle, along a guitar string to make a characteristic whining or ringing sound.

It's now some 25 years since the ethnomusicologist David Evans proved that this technique, among black musicians in the southern states of the US, derives from a children's instrument known in some areas as the 'bo diddley'.

Children would stretch a length of wire along a fence and fix it so that they could play tunes on it with a knife or a glass. Similar children's instruments have been reported from, and recorded in, various parts of Africa.

Many of the older generation of blues players have told how they constructed an instrument of this kind before graduating to a home-made 'banjo' or 'guitar' by cobbling together various discarded domestic implements.

One of these veterans, the great Gus Cannon, played hauntingly beautiful 'slide banjo' in one 1927 solo recording before making that astonishing series of 78s with Cannon's Jug Stompers, perhaps the greatest of the Memphis-based jug bands.

Now, it's just possible that Gus Cannon visited Hawaii in his childhood or youth, and the same can be said of Blind Willie McTell, Tampa Red, and all those other early exponents of slide guitar, including that unnamed slide guitarist heard by W.C. Handy on a Mississippi railway station around the year 1900.

Possible, but extremely unlikely.

How strange that learned professors still clutch at any fragile straw to avoid having to acknowledge the African contributions to music, language, and much else.

A blow to scholarship

I'VE just seen the appalling news that the British Library, under government pressure, will in future be selective about what it keeps on its shelves instead of collecting, so far as possible, every book and journal printed in this country.

Just why this is bad news, and a threat to both present-day and future scholarship, I shall try and explain next week.

Peter Fryer

Edinburgh Festival

Ireland, Bosnia and Edinburgh

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

IN BRENDAN BEHAN's 'The Hostage' Pat, the Dublin brothel-keeper who was 'out' in the 1916 Easter rising proclaims: 'This is 1960 . . . the days of heroes is past!' To which the ebullient Meg responds: 'The old cause is never dead!'

When Behan's politically ambiguous, wonderfully ragbag romp of a show was first staged in the late 1950s, Meg's comment could have been mistaken for nostalgia. Today it seems prophetic.

In a fine revival by the Arches Theatre Company from Glasgow — at the Edinburgh Fringe festival until 3 September — director Andy Arnold wisely avoids any extensive updating of a script which always allowed for improvisation.

At one point, however, when the republican officer (Andrew Curry) has just come on stage, Pat (Eamonn Hunt) steps forward to confide in the audience: 'I should make it clear that, in accordance with government restrictions, the IRA man's words are spoken by an actor.' Even Behan could not have envisaged a moment quite so zany.

Seedy

Behan's seedy mock-romanticism, counterbalanced by tragedy which hits below the belt just when the party's in full swing, is well captured by the Arches players, led by Terry Neason in fine voice as Meg. This year's Edinburgh Fringe is rich in Irish theatre. Across town a centrepiece of the Traverse Theatre's international programme is Communicado's rumbustious version of John Millington Synge's 'The Playboy of the Western World' — arguably the best play from the golden age of Irish drama. And the 'official' Festival has a prestigious Abbey Theatre production of Synge's 'The Well of the Saints'.

When 'The Playboy' was first staged in Dublin in 1907, riots ensued. Synge's de-romanticising of the Irish peasantry gave offence to an Irish bourgeoisie tutored politically in the 19th century by O'Connell and Parnell. It preferred to think of its rural fellow-nationals as having their failings of course, but at heart good Catholic folk with staunch, mothering women at the centre of their communities.

Television

The spirit of television

Review by Jeff Jackson

have nothing to do with anything of our deep capacity for life at various levels.'

Raine, who considers her life's work to be the regathering of the threads of wisdom, believes



Kathleen Raine

For Raine, what is necessary is 'a revitalisation of spirituality' to give people a centre to their lives. But this direction won't come from the bishops, she says. 'They're not going to save the world . . . they really

believes profoundly in our possessing an 'inner light', 'a divine spark'. A view not shared by zoologist Richard Dawkins as expressed in his conversation with Sheena MacDonald on

rooted in growing middle-class self-confidence, married to ambiguity about relations with Britain. Creative writers were inspired to explore questions of history and tradition and how they influence people's sense of their human and social identity.

The struggle for national self-determination has had a more direct impact on the Festival in the form of a bitter argument related to the Bosnian war. Last year, at his newly-established European Arts Foundation, the indefatigable Richard Demarco was a lone voice among major artistic figures calling for attention to be paid to Bosnia, and the plight of Sarajevo in particular.

This year there is still little acknowledgement of what is actually happening to European culture in Bosnia from a Festival hierarchy basking in glowing notices for performances of Beethoven's 'Fidelio', Shakespeare's 'Anthony and Cleopatra' and other highlights from Europe's cultural past. But Demarco has brought 'Witnesses of Existence' — an unmissable exhibition of work by Sarajevo artists — to his Albany Street arts centre. And the Edinburgh Film Festival responded to approaches from the 'war cinema', at Sarajevo's Obala Gallery, leading to its inclusion of a three-day 'Sarajevo and Edinburgh' theme, and an agreement to screen selected features from Edinburgh (including Ken Loach's 'Ladybird, Ladybird', reviewed last week) in the Bosnian capital in October.

This well-intentioned exercise nearly foundered on the political naivety of the Film Festival organisers. They vitiated their Bosnian initiative by programming two Serbian films back-to-back with Bosnian ones, all under the 'Sarajevo and

Edinburgh' heading. Srđan Vuletic, the 23-year-old Sarajevo director of 'I burnt My Legs' and a documentary on the 'Witness of Existence' artists, said: 'We come from a city completely destroyed by the Serbian army. It is incredible that a film festival should think it right to group our work with that of Serbian film-makers.'

It showed that people 'are still not taking our war seriously,' he added. A compromise was reached and the Serbian films were shown separately in an unscheduled slot with no admission charge. Thus the organisers sought to apologise to the Bosnian delegation and to avoid charges of censorship.

But some supporters of the Bosnian cause complained bitterly that a cultural boycott had not been operated against the Serbian films.

All friends of Bosnia, however, will admire Bernard-Henri Lévy's and Alain Ferrarri's documentary 'Bosna', marred only by an excessively obtrusive and self-indulgent commentary. 'Bosna' is admirably made and should be widely shown.

'Will historians look back to the years 1992-94 and say "Europe died at Sarajevo"', asks Lévy. It is a question no festival, of itself, can answer. Edinburgh has Richard Demarco and Bosnian aid workers to thank that at Europe's largest arts festival it was at least asked.

■ 'The Hostage' is at the Assembly Rooms; 'The Playboy of the Western World' is at the Traverse Theatre; 'Witnesses of Existence' is at the Richard Demarco European Arts Foundation — all until the end of the Festival next weekend. The Film Festival ends on 27 August.

provide a truer view of the world, marginally. Charles Manson doesn't understand what 'sorry' means. An interview he gave from Corcoran Prison last September, 25 years after his role in the gruesome mass murders, formed the basis of WITNESS: 'Manson — The Man Who Killed the Sixties' (Channel 4 10 August).

Honest
'Let's say this: am I honest? I can say anything . . . I've been "sorry" all my life. I was sorry I was born, is what my mother told me. I've been at the bottom of this pile as long as I can remember. 'Everybody's had permission to bite any part of me they wanna chew up. I don't really, honestly know what a lot of those words mean that you guys use. What does "sorry" mean? . . . I'm asking all these "whys" to myself as you ask these "whys" of me. I don't know how to deal with this "sorry" thing, guy . . . I don't understand "sorry".'

Russian avant garde revisited

REX DUNN reviews the British Library exhibition: **Russian avant garde books, 1912-34**, in the King's Library, British Museum, until 25 September

THE British Library's summer exhibition gives us a glimpse of the rise and fall of the Russian avant garde through changes in book design (and some posters) during the revolutionary period and its aftermath.

The exhibition begins with posters produced by Malevich (text by Mayakovsky) at the beginning of World War I. Unashamed Great Russian chauvinism is the prevailing sentiment.

In stark contrast, midway through the exhibition, we see some optimistic agitprop posters from the civil war period. Here the emphasis is on the cultural as well as the physical emancipation of the masses, as a first step towards socialist construction.

But towards the end of the exhibition we are informed of the suppression of the avant garde by the Stalinist regime. In 1934 Socialist Realism was imposed as the official, 'socialist' art of the Soviet Union.

At around this time the first Samizdat books were produced and circulated unofficially. They tried to keep alive the avant garde tradition. The exhibition ends with examples of 1990s Samizdat, based on a return to Futuristic designs.

Russian modernist art was forged from the contending and overlapping movements of Futurism, Suprematism and Constructivism, all of which were transformed by the October Revolution.

The exhibition follows 'radical changes in the art of the book' which 'were made by Russian artists before and after the 1917 Revolution'.

The first books we see are 'illustrated booklets, lithographed by Futurists from handwritten texts, as well as innovative printed designs by Constructivists, the pioneers of photomontage and typographic covers.'

Some of these are displayed in a reproduction of Rodchenko's design for a Workers' Club Reading Room and originally presented at the 'International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Arts' in 1925.

The fate of the Russian avant garde also determined the fate of the avant garde as a whole in the history of modernist art. After that, arguably, for art as a whole, it has been mostly downhill.

The exhibition provides an opportunity to re-examine the major debates at the heart of modernist art. With hindsight these debates reveal that the Russian avant garde was cursed with an Achilles heel.

One contemporary, spare-time critic understood this weakness, that it tried to run before it could walk. In his 'Literature and Revolution' (1924) Trotsky criticised 'utopian sectarianism' in these movements. The Russian avant garde proved to be an important factor in its own nemesis.

The background to this weakness of the post-1917 avant garde was the historical achievement of bourgeois art, which was to distance art from life, as a 'separate' sphere of activity.

Movements such as Cubism and Futurism which started before 1917 did not challenge this achievement. They distinguished themselves as avant gardists because they sought to revolutionise art itself rather than overthrow the bourgeois institution of art.

The attitude of the Constructivists typifies the utopian character of Russian art at this time. They 'envisaged a world in which art was no

'The assault upon art-for-art's-sake and the espousal of 'art-into-life' was exploited for its own purposes by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the form of Socialist Realism.'

longer a dreamworld to which the working man retired for relaxation and to regain his balance, but became the very stuff of his life' (Camilla Gray).

But although this remained a utopian dream, these artists did revolutionise the fields of typographical and poster design and their work was then deployed by modern industrial mass-production processes.

In principle this was in the interests of the proletariat, but workers themselves were not able to participate in the new aesthetic. They faced the country's extreme cultural backwardness inherited from Tsarism.

As Marx said, under capitalism, 'if you want to enjoy art, you have to be an artistically cultivated person',

and the very producers of commodities themselves are excluded from that activity. Only in a very limited sense could the avant garde claim that their slogan 'art into life' had been realised.

It was the increasingly doctrinaire and therefore sectarian approach to art which constituted the most dangerous weakness in the Russian avant garde.

The Constructivists in particular inherited from the 19th century Wanderers movement a disdain for 'art-for-art's-sake'.

The Wanderers had close connections with peasant artisans and condemned bourgeois art (easel painting, etc.) as a 'dishonest occupation not worthy of a thinking man'.

The Constructivists called it 'a speculative [that is, useless] activity' which needed to be replaced by 'socially directed work'. They hoped to build a socialist reality 'a hundred times more beautiful than art'.

This attitude is epitomised in Alexei Gan's Constructivist Manifesto of 1922: Any notion of art as being even partly a spiritual or reflective activity was condemned as akin to religion or philosophy. Thus Gan concluded: 'We declare uncompromising war on art!'

This assault upon 'art-for-art's-sake' and the espousal of 'art-into-life' was later shared by the Stalinist bureaucracy, who exploited it for their own purposes in the equally prescriptive form of 'Socialist Realism'.

Later still, the postmodernists have appropriated the avant garde's utopian slogan 'art-into-life' for their own cynical, dystopian purposes.

For them, 'art-into-life' has been achieved under capitalism in the triumph of the market and the birth of the mass-media, mass-consumer society. The packaging and processing of commodities is as much part of the new aesthetic as is their eclectic reflection by artists themselves.

Thus the theory and practice of the postmodernists is itself an indirect product of the poisonous legacy of Stalinism, for the latter has not only betrayed and strangled the struggles of the proletariat over the decades; it has also extinguished, for the present at least, the hopes and aspirations of artists and intellectuals, as well as of the masses.

Constructivist art ranged from painting to architecture. The painting was only a stage on the way to something practical and socially-useful, such as buildings, book designs, clothing and so on.

In the field of book design, Rodchenko was a pioneer, using the technique of photomontage as well as new graphic designs. He used photomontage to produce Mayakovsky's poem 'About This'. There are many examples of their collaboration in this exhibition.

History was not on the side of the avant garde. After an exhausting civil war and in the face of the growing isolation of the October Revolution, the Bolshevik regime was forced to retreat into the New Economic Policy (NEP).

This retreat also struck a fatal blow at the avant garde and its hopes of 'laboratory art' in the hands of artists who saw themselves as workers, engineers, useful members of society: the hope that the new art itself might provide an independent basis to 'change life'.

The NEP was reflected culturally in a new emphasis on the need for pictorial art such as mass poster displays. There was also partly belated recognition of the problems of mass illiteracy.

The new orientation towards the needs of the masses proved to be a setback to the avant garde, the non-objective art movement in particular.

More importantly, the NEP was a setback for all those who defended the notion of an 'art free from all social constraint'.

In their haste to sacrifice the autonomy of art — before the achievement of socialism — the avant garde and their 'art-into-life' ethos, now in the form of Proletcult public art, played into the hands of a totalitarian regime, a regime which



Cover for 'Architektura Vhutemas'. Lissitsky, 1928.

was poised to defend the gains of October in its own interests.

Unnecessarily polarised debates about the autonomy of art, as an end in itself, or 'bourgeois' art, as opposed to the reduction of art, as merely a means to an end, socially-useful or 'socialist' art, were at first exploited and then brutally suppressed by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the early 1930s.

Sensing the growing power of the Stalinist faction, opportunist critics became increasingly critical of 'bourgeois formalism'. A dangerously prescriptive view of art also suited the bureaucracy's purpose.

These critics sided with the Proletcult movement's attack on 'bourgeois' art, an attack which had thousands of misguided supporters and opened the door to Stalinist Socialist Realism and its oppressive consequences.

The Stalinist regime also insisted on non-autonomous art, that is, the artist must continue to function as

'The theory and practice of the postmodernists is an indirect product of the poisonous legacy of Stalinism, for the latter has not only betrayed and strangled the struggles of the proletariat; it has also extinguished, for the present at least, the hopes and aspirations of artists and intellectuals as well as of the masses.'

'an engineer of human souls', albeit under the direction of an increasingly degenerated, increasingly bureaucratized, workers' state.

Later these same opportunists attacked, and paved the way for the regime's suppression of all artistic movements, just as it suppressed the working class.

In 1934 Socialist Realism was imposed as the official art of the Soviet Union. It was neither socialist nor realist. Its function was to idealise 'reality' in order to glorify the bureaucracy's policies and to mask their actual negative effects from the standpoint of the proletariat.

The avant garde failed to understand that a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy was now in charge. They preferred to believe that the Stalinist faction was committed to building socialism in its own perverse way; that it was possible to build socialism in a single country.

Consciousness, including the hope

for a socialist future, always lags behind events.

This may explain the U-turn in the work of Lissitsky. The exhibition illustrates the point well: prior to 1934 he was one of the leading producers of radical, imaginative, utilitarian art. By 1934 he was producing conservative, utilitarian works such as illustrated books on industrialisation during the First Five Year Plan.

He produced propaganda for the regime, but it is conceivable that he exercised self-censorship, expunging avant garde forms from his work, on the one hand because he wanted to remain loyal to the Party, ostensibly the Party of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and on the other because both avant garde and Stalinist aesthetics shared the same utilitarian approach to art.

Although this exhibition focuses on book design it raises questions which go right to the heart of the debate about modernist art, which involve the dialectical relationship between aesthetics and the class struggle.

The age of the mass reproducibility of the image, as of commodities themselves, opened the door to the possibility for art to be reunited with life. The historic separation of the two also excluded the proletariat from both the production and the reception of art.

The October Revolution transformed the subjective, utopian outlook of the Russian avant garde. Henceforth they believed it was possible to proceed directly to the implementation of the goal of 'art-into-life' in order to change life.

They failed to appreciate that the separation of the artistic sphere from everyday life was the objective consequence of the development of capitalism in its universal commodity form in which labour itself becomes a commodity.

Paradoxically, as Marx says, art is now constituted as a 'distinct and superior form of labour'. The goal of reuniting art with life and the labour process must await the emergence of a new socialist society which has rid itself of every last vestige of the old and established the basis for production by freely associated labour.

The prerequisite for this, however, is the ceaseless struggle in the political sphere for revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, which of course does not exclude the latter.

The tragedy of the Russian avant garde is a lesson to us all.

Помлада



Russian Futurist books. 'Pomada' ('Pomada') A Kruchenykh, 1913. Lithograph by M. Larionov.

Cape workers march against murder

THOUSANDS of workers were came out of their plants and marched through Cape Town last Tuesday, reacting to the murder of a striking Cape Gas worker by company security guards.

The angry walkout was the latest in a chain of explosions rocking South Africa's 'Government of National Unity', led by the African National Congress.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union called the mass walkout, demanding compensation for the family of murdered union member A. Kilane, prosecution of the security guard, closure of the security firm involved, Sea Point Armed Response Security Guards, and dismissal of Cape Gas managing directors.

While liberals, Stalinists and trade union bureaucrats in Britain and other countries continue to worship Nelson Mandela and the ANC, South African workers' discontent over low pay, poor housing and police brutality has erupted in a massive strike movement which shows no sign of abating.

Right

"We are being asked by our members if democracy will ever mean anything more than the right to vote every five years," Sam Shilowa, general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), admitted recently, having difficulty justifying the unions' continued political

BY DAVID DORFMAN

alliance with the government.

The South African Communist Party (SACP), trying to face both ways, has expressed sympathy with struggling workers while clinging to its seats in the bourgeois government.

Accused

Last month police used rubber bullets, tear gas and savage dogs against striking Pick 'n' Pay shopworkers. ANC and SACP ministers accused workers of violence!

The Communist Party criticised police brutality, but as a Workers International statement pointed out, the police minister is a former COSATU assistant general secretary and current SACP leader.

In Natal, where trade unionists and young people resent the imposition of Inkatha rule by terror, ballot-rigging and ANC compromise, the SACP suspended leading 'hardliner' Harry Gwala, amid inspired press stories accusing him of plotting to kill other SACP and ANC leaders.

Gwala dismissed such allegations as far-fetched, accusing the party leadership of playing

into the hands of reactionaries. He linked the SACP's crisis with the working-class offensive. But stuck with a Stalinist perspective, Gwala says the Communist Party must maintain its alliance with the bourgeois ANC, and stay in the government (interview in 'Weekly Worker', 11 August).

Nelson Mandela's promised 'commission of truth and reconciliation' is due to open in October, ostensibly to probe political murders and other crimes under the old apartheid regime.

It is suspected that white South African generals still running the armed forces have enough hold on ANC defence minister Joe Modise to stop the truth coming out, by threatening to name prominent ANC members, including cabinet ministers, who were secret police informers.

The ANC leadership and the SACP Stalinists also fear the facts coming out about torture and murders within ANC-run camps outside South Africa, and some assassinations of militants which may not have been carried out by the apartheid state itself.

ANC member Iain Edwards, a historian at Natal University, doubts whether much will result from the commission, pointing out that it is neither a judicial

inquiry nor a normal government investigation. 'It's completely farcical,' he says 'The shadowy secret services on both sides (ANC and previous white racist regime) have got together and made an alliance' ('Sceptics dismiss ANC "truth" forum', 'Sunday Times', 21 August).

The Workers International opposes talk of 'reconciliation'. 'The oppressed cannot reconcile with apartheid murderers', says the South African Trotskyist paper 'Workers International News' in an editorial. It rejects attempts by white racists like General van der Merwe 'to equate apartheid crimes with acts perpetrated as part of the struggle against apartheid'.

Victims

'Workers International News' demands a commission composed only of victims of apartheid, to investigate all those responsible for murders, kidnappings and assaults carried out for the apartheid regime. It says presidents, ministers, civil servants, judges, newspaper owners, and apartheid regime spies in top ANC positions must all be investigated.

The South African Trotskyist paper also demands that 'Win-

nie Mandela must appear before the Commission over the death of Stompie, and the Commission must investigate the allegations of murder in the ANC camps in exile' ('Truth Commission or Omission', 'Workers International News', No. 2, August 1994).

(The ANC president's ex-wife recently said she was 'sorry' that she had 'failed to protect' black youth Stompie Moeketsi from her own security guards.)

It is plain to see in South Africa that the political independence of the working class is championed only by the Trotskyists. Though desperately short of resources, the small, persecuted South African section of the Workers International is winning a big audience for its ideas in the current working-class upsurge.

Following a meeting with Cape Gas shop stewards a team of trades unionists was formed to help distribute a Workers International leaflet (see this page and front page). 'All workers in the Western Cape now know that we really stand by their struggles', says a leading Workers International comrade.

An earlier public meeting addressed by trades unionists from Cape Gas and victimised Golden Arrow bus workers

adopted a resolution saying on a working class-led revolution could bring about the fundamental change needed for the masses to attain their rights. It also launched a campaign to break apartheid-created local government and replace it with democratic, accountable mass bodies.

■ Issue 2 of 'Workers International News' features an interview with Pick 'n' Pay strikers, reports on strikes, and analysis of Mandela's budget, and the crisis in the South African Communist Party.

Jabu Makathini makes the case for nationalisation of workers' control, and there is an item examining the 'socialist conference' organised by the SACP and COSATU.

Obstacles

Our comrades in South Africa face big obstacles, as well as huge opportunities.

If you would like to follow and assist the struggle for permanent revolution and worker freedom in South Africa, subscribe to 'Workers International News' now! Send £5.50 (for 10 issues) or £10 for ten, to South Africa Fund, c/o Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Briefly . . .

Into the red in China

CHINA will have 268 million unemployed people by the end of the century, according to a government report. The official 'Economic Information Daily News' has also announced bankruptcies coming soon in 18 big cities. It said action would be taken against 'those firms whose debts are larger than their assets, who have no hope of getting out of the red, and whose goods have no future'.

Lesotho's royal rumpus

LESOTHO, in southern Africa, was hit by a general strike

against King Letsie III's dismissal of elected prime minister Ntsu Mokhehle. A week earlier security forces killed five people taking part in demonstrations against the monarchy.

On Monday, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu met the king, tens of thousands of workers struck, bringing the capital, Maseru, to a standstill.

Nigerian strikers arrested

NIGERIA'S military rulers arrested striking oil workers' leader Frank Kokori and other opponents of their regime. University lecturers joined the ongoing strike movement against the dictatorship.

France backs Sudan terror

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

BEHIND the hypocritical guff blown up in the capitalist press about the capture of alleged master-terrorist 'Carlos the Jackal', Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the French state has been engaged in some dirty deals to assist Sudanese state terror.

The Paris daily 'Liberation' has revealed that:

■ The French secret service provided the Sudanese regime with satellite photographs showing camps of the rebel Popular Front for the Liberation of South Sudan.

■ Because of French influence, Sudanese government troops have been allowed to operate from bases in the Central African Republic (a former French colony) to attack the rebels in southern Sudan.

■ High-ranking Sudanese secret police officers have visited their French counterparts several times, most recently eight weeks ago.

'Liberation' says Jean-Claude Manton, a French agent based in the Central African Republic, maintained friendly links with El Fatih Irwa, the Sudanese president's security adviser.

The Sudanese government, trying to hold down the working class as well as fight rebels in the mainly-Christian south, is hoping it can have its name removed from the US list of 'states sponsoring terrorism', so as to qualify for some sorely needed Western imperialist capital to boost the economy.

French imperialism, whose secret services have their own record of international terror-

ism (remember 'Rainbow Warrior') is after a much bigger catch than a clapped-out freelance terrorist like 'Carlos'. Already economically and politically dominant in much of Africa, French interests want to consolidate and expand their influence, in rivalry with what they consider an 'Anglo-Saxon axis' — British and US interests.

The French government, having accused Germany and Britain of harbouring Islamic militants who threaten its interests in north Africa, may have taken a counter-move by establishing ties with the Islamic regime in Sudan, a strategic move towards east Africa.

France's military intervention in Rwanda was presented to the world as a bold humanitarian act while the UN dithered, and the people were butchered.

Few fell for it, least of all Rwandans, who knew the French government's record of backing their killers. 'France the arsonist is not qualified to be a firefighter', protested Rwandans in Brussels.

In 1975 President Giscard d'Estang signed a secret military pact with Rwanda's president Juvenal Habyarimana. On 3 October 1990, President Mitterrand sent French troops to Kigali to back Habyarimana against the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). These troops stayed to train and arm the regime's army, which swelled from 5,000 to 40,000 troops.

A peace agreement signed last year in Tanzania, providing for a transition to democratic government and the withdrawal of French troops, was shot down with the presidential plane on 6 April. Within half an hour of

Habyarimana's death, the killer squads were out in Kigali starting the massacres.

French weapons were shipped out to the Rwandan regime, and according to Sam Kiley ('The Times', 22 August) the French secret service recruited white mercenaries to fight the RPF forces. Kiley says Operation Turquoise — the French military intervention in June to set up a 'safe zone' — wasn't to end massacres, or protect humanitarian aid workers. 'France intervened in Rwanda for France,' he says.

Although the French forces failed to stop the RPF, Rwanda's troubles are far from over, and could spread to neighbouring Burundi.

Colonel Didier Thibaut, who led the French force, told Kiley that the RPF forces were British-trained. French strategists suspect British and American collusion with Uganda's President Museveni to penetrate central Africa. France's chief of staff, General Jacques Lanxade, according to Kiley, talks about an 'Anglo-Saxon conspiracy' to undermine Francophone (French-speaking) Africa by the spread of the English language.

Language means business. This is what is setting imperialist powers like Britain and France against each other. Behind the new 'scramble for Africa' is the scramble for mineral wealth and people to exploit, in a frantic search for profit which threatens to turn the entire continent into a killing ground.

Even if 'Carlos' was responsible for all the killings the media have attributed to him, he is an amateur compared with the jackals in Paris, Washington, and London.

Nigeria: Tory MEP puts blame on Bonn

THE German government blocked European Union support for democracy in Nigeria because it feared harm might come to German business links with the military regime, a Tory member of the European parliament has claimed.

Edward McMillan-Scott, MEP for North Yorkshire, last month urged that European ambassadors in Nigeria should visit opposition leader Chibabhai Moshood Abiola in prison. Abiola, regarded as the winner of last year's cancelled election, was jailed last month after proclaiming himself president. He has been charged with treason.

McMillan-Scott's idea was turned down, and he says he was told 'important national interests' precluded it. Germany holds the EU presidency this year.

Build

The British MEP says a German company is involved in building Nigeria's new capital, Abuja. German firms are also helping to build an aluminium smelter on the coast, and the Nigerian navy is purchasing equipment from Dornier.

Thousands of Nigerian workers and students have been taking part in strikes and demonstrations against the military regime. Hardest hit has been the oil industry, which brings in 80 per cent of Nigeria's foreign earnings. The biggest company is Shell.

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