

Build fight back against anti-trade-union laws

DEFEND THE SEFTON TWO!

SUPPORT grows for two officers of Britain's biggest union UNISON fined for breaking the anti-union laws and a fight-back conference to discuss this and other issues is being organised for 17 September.

This conference will be a blow against the public sector union's general secretary, Alan Jinkinson, who has banned the use of branch or other funds throughout the union to pay the fines of the Sefton branch officers fined under the anti-union laws.

Jinkinson also calls on union members *not* to support the officers 'in any other way'.

The officers, Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy, were fined £250 each by Manchester Crown Court on Friday 29 July for organising strike action to defend jobs.

Sefton No.1 branch forced a back down on plans to privatise the Technical Services Department when they struck on 28 June, the day the final decision was due to be taken by the council.

Flanagan and Murphy were also ordered to pay one-eighth of the court costs each. The court has ordered the remainder of the costs to be paid by UNISON, despite pleas from full-time officers that they had opposed the strike. The union was also fined £5,000.

But instead of congratulating Sefton No.1 on their victory in protecting jobs and services, Jinkinson has written to all branch secretaries telling them not to contribute in any way to the payment of the fines of the Sefton Two:

'It is essential for the protection of the union's funds [and Jinkinson's salary!] and to allow it to continue to operate and fight successfully for its members' interests, that all members in all branches do nothing to support financially or in any other way the acts of Mr Flanagan and Mr Murphy that were admitted by them to have been in contempt of court. In particular, *no* union funds, at

BY MICHAEL TYLER

branch level or anywhere else, must be used to pay their fines or costs.'

Before the strike Sefton No.1 had approached officials, asking them to hold a strike ballot. This was refused and they held their own vote.

Union rules say that it is only the general secretary who can authorise a strike.

The council obtained a court order prohibiting the planned action. The successful strike went ahead anyway.

Hence the contempt of court proceedings against Flanagan and Murphy. On each of their three court appearances they were strongly supported by a crowd of about 800 trades unionists demonstrating loudly outside.

Banners

Union banners came from all around the country from UNISON, the Fire Brigades Union, the transport workers' unions TGWU and RMT, the National Union of Mineworkers, teachers and trades councils.

Rows of police protected the court and riot vans waited nearby.

The Sefton Two remained defiant despite the risk of imprisonment.

Before passing sentence, the judge said: 'I am bound to take notice of the number of people outside court'.

Sefton council was also frightened of repercussions from heavy fines or imprisonment. Earlier in the day they had applied unsuccessfully for an extension of the court order banning industrial action.

Flanagan said after the fine: 'What's it like to win? We're going to do it again, that's for sure! I wish UNISON leaders

would look at the support we've got. If we get off our knees and start arguing we can win. The arguments are the same everywhere.

'UNISON must smash the pay freeze and we must get rid of the government after 15 years of this repression.

'We took on the employer and won and we took on the courts and the union leadership. I can't wait to get rid of this government and this system and I would be prepared to go to jail if necessary.'

Murphy told the crowd: 'Our council and our union took us on and lost. The council's barrister was paid £5,500 for one day's work. This fight is about socialism and we must carry on fighting until everyone has a house and a job and nobody earns £5,500 a day. We'll build socialism and together we'll be free.'

Brendon Wood of Sheffield UNISON called on trades unionists to support any action organised to stop UNISON victimising the Sefton Two. 'I think we're quite competent to raise the cost of the fines', he said.

■ Messages of support and information from 051-920 6140 or fax 051-928 0298.

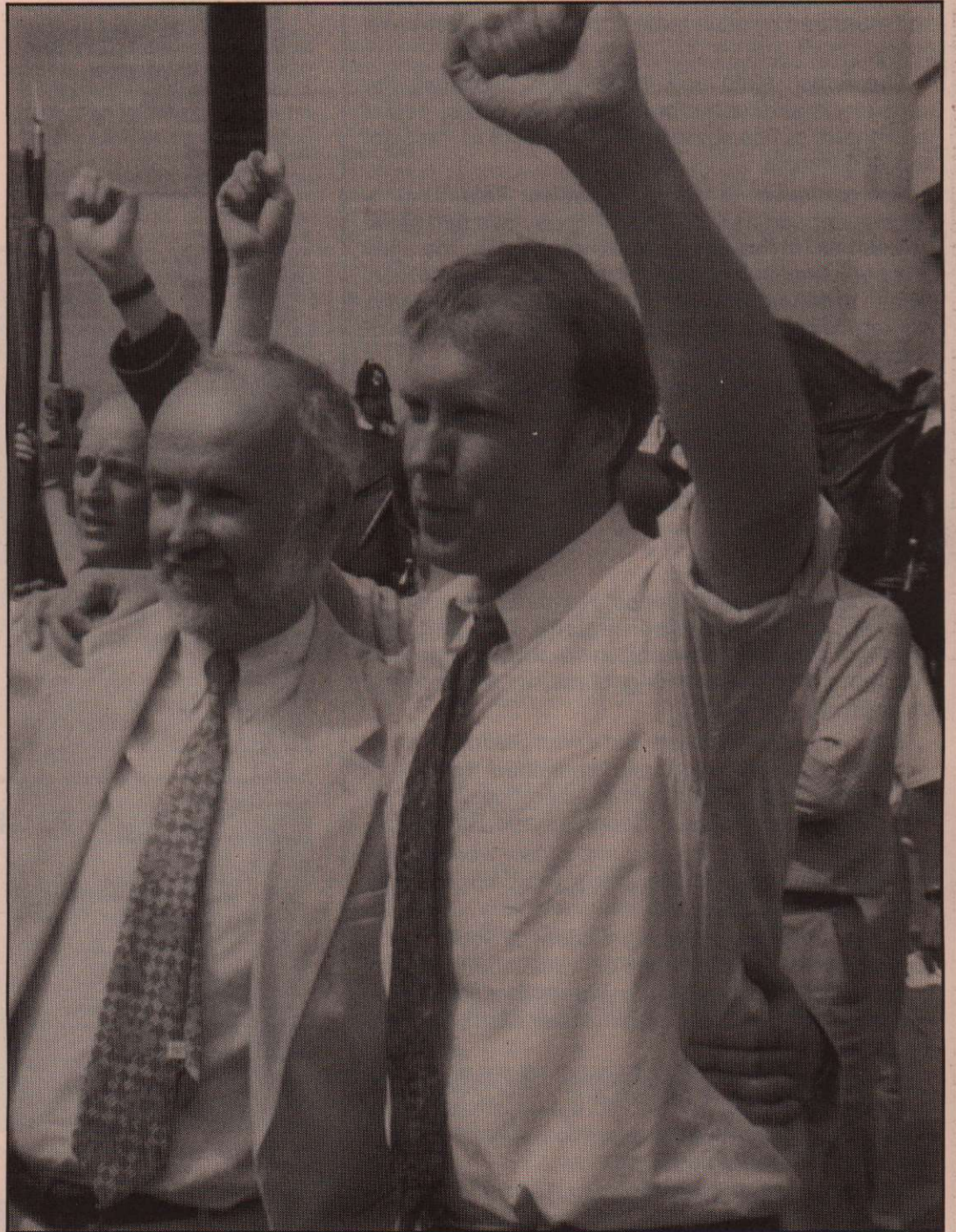
Make cheques/postal orders payable to the 'Sefton 2 Defence Fund' and send to Sefton No.1 UNISON, 38 Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 4QQ.

Sefton No.1 UNISON have called the union delegate conference on Saturday 17 September.

The main agenda items will be to discuss the strike victory and the actions of the UNISON bureaucracy and 'the issue of pay and the response of rank-and-file activists to the weak leadership offered by UNISON'.

The conference will be at Bottle town hall, 11am-4pm. Each branch or shop stewards' committee is invited to send five delegates at £5 each.

Official observers will also be welcome.



The Sefton Two outside Manchester Crown Court: Martin Murphy (left) and Nigel Flanagan

Help our struggle for a revolutionary workers' party in South Africa

LAST Tuesday (6 September) a strike of about 1,800 dock workers began in South Africa. The casual workers are not members of a union and if unorganised workers like this come forward in struggle it shows the depth of the movement there in South Africa.

The information about this strike came from our comrades in the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa) who are working to reconstruct and take forward working-class consciousness through building a revolutionary workers' party.

Just as much, if not more than the WRP (see Fund on page 2 every week!), our comrades in South Africa need resources to carry on this struggle.

On top of this our comrades face death threats. One comrade has been expelled from his post as

trade union organiser for the print workers' union, the PPAWU, because he campaigned in the elections for the Workers International (see TUC campaigning round-up, page 3).

Our comrades need money for rent, printing bills, telephone bills, and so on — and they naturally turn to us. We try to send them the money as best we can but we really need YOUR help.

What we need is regular donations for our South African comrades through subscriptions to their paper 'Workers International News' and standing orders. Send us £5.50 for five issues and £10 for ten issues made payable to the 'South Africa Fund' to the Workers International, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Include an extra donation if you possibly can. Also write to find out how you can make a standing order.

On other pages:

Irish ceasefire — page 2;

Signal workers — page 3;

Bosnia — pages 4&5;

Killing wholesale — page 6;

Edinburgh festival — page 7;

Kashmir — page 8.

Ceasefire solves nothing

THE ceasefire ordered by the Provisional IRA will neither bring peace to Ireland nor solve a single problem of the working class, north or south.

The assassination of Roman Catholic John O'Hanlon by a Loyalist death squad the very day after the ceasefire was called makes this all too clear.

The action of the IRA is another graphic illustration that the politics of bourgeois nationalism can only lead the working class down a blind alley and to defeat.

■ The IRA and Sinn Fein for years have foisted a reactionary policy on the working class. Their perspective was based on the fantasy that a united and developing capitalist Ireland was possible.

At every point the IRA and Sinn Fein, whether they employed the gun or the ballot box, subordinated the interests of the working class to those of the Irish bourgeoisie. Now they cynically use the widespread feeling for peace to carry out their latest capitulation to imperialism.

With great heroism, the nationalist community in the north of Ireland has defended itself against the murderous bigots of the UFF and the UVF, against the B-Specials, the British Army and the RUC.

They have endured the H-Blocks — for long the only concentration camp in western Europe. Their young people have been battered by rubber bullets and murdered by state forces operating a shoot-to-kill policy.

The British state and its servants, including the trade union and labour bureaucracy, failed to defeat the fighters of this community. We salute its heroism and endurance.

For centuries Britain has treated Ireland as a colonial dependency. The WRP does not stand aside as neutrals on this issue. Trotskyists are for the unity of the whole of Ireland and for the military and political defeat of the imperialist British state which exploits workers 'at home' as it oppresses all the people of Ireland.

The successful unification of Ireland — a unification that alone opens up a future for the 'Protestant' working class in the north — can only be achieved by a working-class struggle for a socialist Ireland, as part of an international struggle for a socialist world.

* * * * *

THE present 'peace process' removes none of the causes of the struggles in Ireland. It is part of a process that is spawning new and dangerous situations for the working class, in Ireland and throughout the world.

Stalinism has collapsed. But it was Stalinism which ideologically and materially sustained nationalist movements like the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the African National Congress and Sinn Fein.

Now, in the name of peace and a 'new world order', all these forces have in one way or another made their open accommodation with imperialism.

■ Mandela has become president of South Africa, but he shares power with the old white supremacists, and capitalism is still intact. The police still fire on workers, but under a black rather than a white minister.

■ Arafat has accepted the role of 'mayor of the West Bank', leaving unresolved the legitimate needs of the Palestinian refugees who have spent a generation of bloody struggle in exile.

■ However he dresses it up, Adams leaves the nationalist working class to make his peace with the British ruling class.

The Irish economy reflects in the acutest form the deepening crisis of world imperialism. Meetings between Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring and US President Clinton can do nothing to solve this crisis, whatever the talk about an 'aid programme'.

The heavy engineering industries where the 'Protestant' working class had its base have virtually disappeared. The attempts to inject new industries into the area have failed lamentably.

Huge British subsidies have never provided a basis for stability in the life of the people of the north.

Mass unemployment and poverty will continue to be the experience of workers in every part of Ireland.

Sinn Fein is politically bankrupt.

A new party of workers must be built across all the community. This must be based on the unshakable conviction that the future belongs to the working class, the only class that can solve the accumulated problems of history.

Hard facts on Scottish socialism

JUST in case English readers of Workers Press get carried away with James D. Young's phrase 'the distinctive Scottish radicalism and socialism of successive generations' (Letters, 3 September), a few comments.

Of course, like all other peoples, we Scots brought forth our own brand of concepts and leadership. But what is the present situation?

The Scottish Labour Party is every bit as reformist as its English counterpart. The Scottish Trades Union Congress has for some time now been seen as left-leaning, but STUC general secretary Campbell Christie, when it really matters, is every bit as pro-Establishment as TUC general secretary John Monks.

The Scottish Communist Party has a little life in it, but not a tenth of the influence it had as part of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The Democratic Left is practically non-existent. The Scottish Socialist Movement, which began as an umbrella movement for the left is now no more than a small coterie doing a job as best they can.

Tommy Sheridan can get on the radio and more than hold his own with the Scottish Labour Party high-flyers. He keeps his militant approach alive, but not on a Scottish scale.

The call for a Scottish Assembly has receded to a mere memory. Isobel Lindsay, a 'left-wing' member of the Scottish National Party, has found it prudent to join the Labour Party.

A few years ago a small group tried to form a Scottish Socialist Party, or something similar, with James D. Young as one of its prominent supporters. It stood a candidate at the famous Govan by-election, won by Jim Sillars for the SNP; in spite of TV coverage the groups' candidate got a derisory vote.

The Workers Revolutionary Party consists of a handful of talented and devoted revolutionaries who, like most other

small groups, fail to expand. These are the hard facts. But I remain an optimist.

One last word on Scottish nationalism. It breeds on the same fertiliser as Le Pen and his counterparts in Germany who hate the Turks.

John P. Mathieson
Glenrothes, Fife

Just another Labour careerist

FIRST impressions can be wrong. But let me tell you a little story, a true one.

When in a Westminster corridor, back in the early 1980s, I was surprised that a brash young man with blatantly right-wing views should join the queue of Labour MPs waiting to vote.

So I nudged Kevin Barron, a Labour MP standing next to me, and said: 'That's strange — a Tory's supporting us tonight.'

Kevin quickly reprimanded me, saying: 'No, no, Ron. That's Tony Blair — he's one of us.'

I simply shook my head in disbelief, wondering what was happening to the party that broke with the Liberals to campaign for socialist policies on behalf of the working class.

But I should have known better. Blair, after all, is part of a long trend of Labour careerists who believe in the capitalist system.

And, with party leading lights now openly courting big business, it is no accident that anti-union bosses like Rupert Murdoch have apparently expressed approval of the new boy.

Mind you, say some workers, Mr Blair can't be any worse than his mentor, Neil Kinnock — because the former Labour 'leader' has been rewarded by John Major with a highly paid sinecure as a Euro-commissioner.

In other words, goes the cynical argument, if you don't intend to beat them, join them. Or at least keep quiet.

Which helps to explain why Blair and company are anxious not to identify with the RMT signallers' dispute, or with

other workers in struggle.

Ron Brown
Leith

'Journal of Trotsky Studies'

IN MY translation of Trotsky's 'In Defence of the Party', published in no. 2 of the 'Journal of Trotsky Studies', there are some printing errors which readers may not be able to correct for themselves.

As the next issue of the journal will not appear for several months, I should be grateful if you would allow me to correct these errors through Workers Press.

1) On page 77, line 18, and again on page 79, line 7 from the bottom of the page, 'professional' should be 'professionist'.

2) On page 147, line 17, 'Marxist' should be 'Maximalist'.

3) On page 201, between the paragraph beginning 'The mass' and the paragraph beginning 'Giving satisfaction', a paragraph has been omitted. It reads:

'The peasants form in Russia a countless mass of people upon whom not only agriculture but also the entire structure of the economy and the state are based. If agriculture were to collapse, the economy and the state would collapse with it.'

4) Also on page 201, in line 3 of the paragraph beginning 'The liberals', 'Milyukov' should be 'Manuilov'.

Brian Pearce
New Barnet, Herts

How not to support the signallers

ONCE again we see a group of workers — this time, the signallers — fighting not only their employers but also the Tory government, and receiving no support from the official leadership of the Trades Union Congress.

Support groups have been set

up in many areas, but more often than not are seen by middle-class 'left' groups as just another opportunity to sell their papers while collecting money to 'support' the signal workers.

Support groups should organise real support from the organised working class by bringing in representatives from all sections of workers in the area and so creating a powerful forum.

In that way the working class would begin to re-establish itself as a class force, become able to overcome the bureaucratic stranglehold on its organisations, and defeat attacks on workers like the signalmen.

An example of how not to support the signal workers was organised outside the engine plant at Ford's, Dagenham. Alongside some real signal workers, a 'supporter' stood holding a copy of 'Socialist Worker' directly over the bucket.

Many of the workers did not contribute, because they thought the collection was for the organisation which prints that journal and not for the signal workers.

Keith Scotcher
Shop steward, Engine Plant,
Dagenham, Essex

Challenging the line

AGAIN a very good Workers Press. I found the article 'Who will speak for the workers?' most interesting. I wonder if someone who knows the railways could write an article challenging the line that the RMT is taking?

I'm not at all impressed at the way things are going with this conflict with the government and the railway authorities. I think they are heading for another miners' debacle. Things have got to change somehow.

Dave Barber
Lewisham

This message was left on Workers Press's answering machine. Please send in any contributions to the debate on the rail dispute in the spirit of this request to us at the address or telephone number above.

COMMENT SIGNAL WORKERS

We need democratic support groups

REX DUNN recounts
experience in his area

IN MY part of north London we have several signal workers' support groups. Their basic tasks are to make contact with the strikers, to raise money, and to organise public meetings in solidarity.

Our North London Signal Workers' Support Group is holding collections on high streets, outside tube stations, even at football matches. Recently just a few of us collected £100 at a Spurs game, despite a small deluge. We are working for a public meeting in early September.

After twelve weeks of escalating strikes on the railways, public sympathy for the signal workers is still

rock-solid. Recent election results have shown the Tories weaker than ever. Two years ago it was the labour bureaucracy which isolated the miners and allowed the government to get away with destroying the mining industry and communities.

While the TUC dampened down solidarity, Labour MPs on a Commons committee voted for closing pits. Some of the 'left groups' were only interested in a movement they could control — and tie to the Labour leadership. Now a new group of workers faces the same cast of enemies, and false 'friends'.

Our support group is an open, democratic body. No left organisation is allowed to dominate, and we keep close contact with the strikers. Recently five of them came to our meeting, and we decided to use

their material for our campaigning.

Our north London group went to a meeting organised by the Haringey group, controlled by members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). There we met the SWP's destructive sectarianism and the same behaviour supporters of the labour bureaucracy used to undermine the miners' support network.

We proposed that a leaflet should be written by the signalworkers — we already had one. This was ignored.

We proposed that a representative steering committee be elected from the meeting. The chair attempted to dismiss this by arguing that this was the official support committee, so why didn't we join it? When we insisted that the motion be put to the meeting, a SWP member prop-

osed that the meeting itself was the steering committee. Only this was put to the meeting, and passed.

We should continue to call for one, democratic support network in the area. We should encourage left-wing Labour Party members and others to take part.

The north London support group meets Mondays, 6.30 pm, at the Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road (near Finsbury Park tube).

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

August close: £1,614.92

In so far for September: £363.90

I WAS pleased to see that the July fund was made when I read Workers Press on my return from a Workers Aid convoy to Bosnia.

The July figure no doubt reflects the efforts of regular supporters — readers and WRP members — to get in money before their holidays. Thank you! But not getting half of the August money means that we're falling short by about £350 a week. There must be 35 people who want Workers Press to continue publication, are in work, and could give an extra £10 a week.

While people who know me can vouch for the fact that I'm not a Puritan and very much not a

member of the Temperance League, I would point out that's less than four packs of ciggies or six pints of beer.

I emphasise that I'm seeking a regular commitment although we're not averse to occasional windfalls like the £200 we received from someone who unexpectedly had a large long-standing loan repaid. Thanks again!

We would be especially pleased if 'new' readers would make such a step — showing, we hope, that more people are beginning to see the need for a paper like Workers Press.

Mike Cooke

Please send money to 'Workers Press', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.



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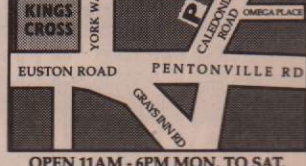
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Labour leaders refuse to back signal workers

TONY BLAIR, Labour misleader, skulked around the corridors, restaurants and bars of last week's TUC congress, but the real level of his support for the signal workers carrying out industrial action is a big fat zero.

BY MIKE COOKE

He sent in deputy Labour leader John Prescott to give the official position. At a Tribune-sponsored meeting, Prescott refused to support the strike action and merely stated: 'I have said I support the cause and it is just.'

Prescott is actually sponsored by the signal workers' union, the RMT, and he can't bring himself to support their actions.

Instead, he accused the government of wanting to keep the strike going until next month's Tory conference. He maintained the government wanted to use the trade union movement as a 'whipping boy' in an attempt to hide the government's 'political incompetence in handling the economy'.

The government had turned the strike into a 'politically motivated dispute'. But in a fight between workers and a na-

tionalised industry controlled by the capitalist state how could it be anything else?

Prescott — and the rest of the Labour Party leadership — wants the signal workers to accept binding arbitration, which would put the dispute in the hands of the same capitalist state that the signal workers are fighting.

The general secretary of the train drivers' union ASLEF, Lew Adams, has threatened that lack of safety may mean that his members may have to consider not working during Thursday 8 September's strike. But noises like this have come from ASLEF before.

Paul Gallagher, engineering union AEEU general secretary and a member of the Health and Safety Commission, has called on the Health and Safety Execu-

tive to conduct an urgent inquiry into the training of the British Rail workers who were being lent to Railtrack for Thursday's strike.

One senior BR manager has said that this attempt to break the strike would make trains less safe. According to him the BR replacement staff were 'amateur professionals'.

Gallagher said: 'I want to know how, after less than two weeks training or retraining, it is possible for Railtrack to say that a person is competent to work in a signal box when it takes nine months to train a signal worker.'

Happy

These union leaders are happy to show the government is 'wrong' to do what it is doing. But what they will not do is organise solidarity action or even arrange their own disputes to coincide with others to keep within the anti-union laws. They do everything to minimise action and mount a proper offensive on the government's 2 per cent public pay ceiling.

Signal workers' support groups must be formed. But they can't limit themselves to just raising money to support the signals strike. They must start discussing and organising ways of bringing the struggles against the government's pay limits together. Only in this way will the signal workers — and all of us — win.

■ In spite of seven sets of anti-union laws, the small but determined group of signal workers, renowned in the past for lack of militancy, have already cost their employers an estimated £150 million.

In addition the strikes have cost member companies of the Institute of Directors £180 million in lost production. The signal workers' action has had 'a serious effect' on business said 29 per cent of IoD members.

Worse hit were the so-called financial services 'industries' in the South East. Barclays Bank alone had spent, up to last week, £100,000 on coaches to get staff to work. The IoD say the strikes cost their businesses £16 million a week.

Internationalism at the TUC

WORKERS PRESS was to the fore, along with others, in taking up a number of critical international issues at this year's TUC congress.

■ Workers Aid for Bosnia issued a leaflet to delegates thanking all those many trade unionists, Labour Party members and others who had helped to make the campaign so successful in the first year of its existence. The first convoy that went to Bosnia visited the TUC at last year's Congress held in Brighton.

But as the leaflet stressed, despite its achievements the people of Bosnia face a terrible winter without adequate food and heating and are threatened with another round of Serbian fascist-type ethnic cleansing.

Workers Aid therefore calls upon the trades unions to redouble their efforts in the struggle for solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Bosnia.

their homes three months ago but so far the police have produced no suspects for the murders.

Comrades campaigning to bring the killers to justice are convinced that this was a political murder — of two comrades who were helping organise the peasant movement in Brazil.

All delegates to the TUC Congress were given the background to the case and urged to make co-ordinated protests on 13 September, as part of an international campaign.

Faxes should be sent to Governador do Estado do Sao Paulo, Luis Antonio Fleury, fax : 010 5511-845-3700; or, PSTU (Workers' Socialist Party-Unifed), fax: 011 5511-575-6093.

■ The African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC) highlighted the recent struggles in Nigeria led by the oil workers (see back page).

'There is great hope for true Democracy to triumph in Nigeria now that the working class is rising to assert leadership of the popular resistance against the neo-colonialist-puppet military dictatorship which imperialism continues to impose, with changing figure-heads, against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the population in that country, as in many other parts of crisis-torn Africa', says their leaflet.

They call for international support so the workers and peasant farmers of Africa can 'strengthen their own independent political organisations and develop their own trustworthy revolutionary leadership to advance the struggle in Nigeria beyond the confines of the false 'democracy' of their rich foreign and local exploiters, stretching it to the far horizons of the true Democracy that the triumph of genuine People's Power on the crest of the Pan-African Revolution will bring to the whole continent of Africa and her diaspora'.

More information can be obtained from Julie Affiong Southey, Deputy General Secretary, Protem Working Committee of ALISC, on 081-202 6292.

■ An appeal from The Concerned Workers Committee of South Africa was also distributed to delegates and visitors. It announced the formation of a committee to fight for democratic rights in the trade union movement of South Africa.

The committee was formed as a result of the sacking of a member of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International for having campaigned for his party in the recent elections. The official policy of the South African trade union movement, represented by the COSATU federation, was to back the African National Congress.

Those wishing to know more about the activities of this committee can fax the organisation on 010 27 21 479 244.

■ A campaign demanding an investigation into the assassination of two Brazilian trade union activists and the punishment of the criminals concerned.

Jose Luis and Rosa Hernandez Sunderman were both militants in the labour union and popular movements of Brazil. They were shot in



Most of the Bosnians facing attacks from the racists in Essex came on the first plane-load of 68 concentration camp prisoners

British racists terrorise ethnic-cleansing victims

BOSNIANS rescued from concentration camps in the former Yugoslavia want to return to their war-ravaged country. They are being terrorised in their Essex homes by violent gangs carrying out their own form of ethnic cleansing.

Twenty five families who escaped from Serbian aggression are scared to leave their homes at night. Families have been stoned and repeatedly robbed and have had excrement smeared on their windows. Young and elderly Bosnians have been taunted in the streets and had beer cans thrown at

Camil Kulasic who was forced to eat soap in a Serbian concentration camp says 'We feel that we've been deceived. We thought there was no racial discrimination in Britain, but that's not the case.'

'We didn't want to come here, we just wanted to stay alive and together. Now we're going through the same racism again. We can hardly wait to go back, but our house is a burnt-out shell and the area is in Serbian hands.'

Kulasic has been left with deep scars on his legs after being attacked in South Ockendon in Essex.

Some Bosnians have been beaten up but are too frightened to report the incidents for fear of reprisals.

The attacks on the Bosnian refugees have become so serious that even the local police have been forced to act and issue mobile phones to refugees so that they can report attacks. Despite numerous attacks only four people have been prosecuted.

A Tory district councillor, Mike Dalton, politically represented the racist scum carrying out these attacks by saying that the Bosnians, like all foreigners, should be 'kicked out and sent

back to where they came from'.

■ The London committee of Workers Aid for Bosnia wants to investigate ways in which the defence of these Bosnian families can be taken up.

The committee appeals to all readers of Workers Press to help us set up a meeting which can begin this work by coming forward with ideas and suggesting others who should be approached.

Contact London Workers Aid on 071-582 5462 or fax 071-582 8834. London Workers Aid can be contacted through Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

London march for jobs '94

12-day march through 20 London boroughs

17-28 September 1994

Smash Workfare!

Tories must go!

Jobs not racism!

Real jobs — proper benefits!

Start of march: Saturday 17 September, 1pm, Lambeth Town Hall, Acre Lane, London SW2.

Contact: London March for Jobs, c/o Lambeth Unemployed and Trade Union Resource Centre, 12-14 Thornton Street, Brixton, London SW9. Tel: 071-733 5135.

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Inside left

Ernie Roberts

VARIOUS papers have carried tributes to Ernie Roberts, former amalgamated Engineering Union (E.U.) assistant general secretary, and Labour MP for Stoke Newington from 1979-87. He died on 29 August, just a few days before his autobiography, 'Strike Back', was published.

The 'Morning Star' (30 August) had a fairly good account, written by Eddie and Ruth Frow, particularly on Ernie Roberts's activity as a young trade unionist in Coventry. 'Tribune' mentioned his stand against the right-wing union machine run by (Lord) Bill Carron. 'Socialist Worker', Paul Holborow described Roberts as a 'launch ally' in the Anti-Nazi League.

'Weekly Worker' (1 September) raised his support for unemployed struggles, regretting only that after being expelled from the Communist Party in 1942 (they don't mention it was for supporting strikes) he tried to fight for socialism through the Labour Party.

A couple of points I remember in Ernie Roberts's favour. In the early 1960s the Labour leadership were worried enough to oppose his election as parliamentary candidate for Horsham. Whether for that reason, or perhaps recalling his early days as founder of Coventry Young Workers' Social Club, he readily agreed to speak at a Young Socialists' weekend school in 1964, when most Labour MPs wanted nothing to do with us.

Memories

On Saturday nights in Salford our agent used to deliver the 'Empire News'. In 1959 a front-page story purported to expose a plot by Trotskyite agitators to wreck British industry by fomenting strikes, and so create conditions for revolution. They had infiltrated the Labour Party and led unions, and had a paper called 'The Newsletter'.

I'd heard of Trotsky, as a leader of the Russian Revolution and founder of the Red Army. But a Trotskyist movement in Britain? Being a bloke selling 'The Newsletter' outside a CND rally at the Free Trade Hall, I bought a copy.

The 'Empire News' (whose editor Jack Fishman 'had a very close working relationship with MI5', according to Phillip Knightley, in 'The Pillory', p.193) has passed away. The Free Trade Hall is about to go too. But Harry Ratner, who made me my first Trotskyist newspaper, took classes introducing us to Marxist theory, and helped bring out a bulletin for striking engineering apprentices, is still going strong.

Harry's memoirs, 'Reluctant Revolutionary', have just been published. He worked with French Trotskyists before the war, served in the Allied invasion of Sicily and Normandy landings, and reported the liberation of Paris for 'Socialist Appeal'. He describes unrest in the British forces at the end of the war, workers' struggles under the post-war Labour government, and the Trotskyist movement's struggle to reorient itself.

As a founder member of the Social-Labour League (forerunner of the Workers Revolutionary Party) and active trade unionist, Harry never developed misgivings about the party's relationship with the working class, and Gerry Healy's leadership.

He left the party, but stayed with the class. We would disagree on the things, but his book makes a valuable contribution to the struggle and a good read.

Charlie Pattison

The most recent Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy took 20 tonnes of food and medical aid to the miners' union and the hospital in the town of Tuzla, northern Bosnia. The 26 members of the convoy team came from Britain, Spain and Portugal. MIKE COOKE reports on a meeting with union representatives in Tuzla and gives his impression of the war-torn city of Mostar in the south of Bosnia-Herzegovina

WORKERS AID for Bosnia convoy members from Britain, Spain and Portugal met trade union representatives in Tuzla at a meeting of the union's local district committee.

The president of the district committee opened the meeting by saying that the aid brought by the convoy was made more important by the fact that during its stay the team would find out about the lives of people in Tuzla. She said that the people lived in a huge jail, created by blocked roads and poor communication. Travel was made difficult by the problems in obtaining visas.

Represented on the district committee were Serbs, Croats and Muslims. They co-operated well, she maintained.

Along with others on the committee, she asked why the convoys had been directed at the miners' union in Tuzla in particular. Mike Cooke, speaking on behalf of the convoy, explained the history of Workers Aid for Bosnia, from its

'The Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign had taken sides with the workers and people of Bosnia against greater Serbian expansion and the complicity of the Western Great Powers in the attempted genocide.'

founding on 6 June 1993. At that time a proposal had been made by a Serbian member of Workers Aid for Bosnia and the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International for a convoy of miners from Britain to the miners of Tuzla. There had been successes and difficulties for the campaign in Britain, and the convoys had had to become more general than just a miners' campaign.

Angel, also speaking on behalf of the convoy, told the district committee about the composition of the convoy team: teachers, metalworkers, unemployed people, young people and others. He explained how the campaign had taken sides with the workers and people of Bosnia against greater Serbian expansion and the complicity of the Western Great Powers in the attempted genocide.

He pointed to the memories of people in Spain during the civil war

with the fascists there in the 1930s. Bosnian workers fought and were buried in Spain in that conflict.

Angel asked for as much information as possible concerning the situation of workers in Bosnia and about how we could participate in the defence of Bosnia. 'What's needed most?' he asked. 'How should it be distributed?'

'We want to help the whole working class,' he added.

He thought it would be very helpful if all the representatives at the meeting could write statements appealing directly to trades unions for help.

The president of the builders' association, Tehnograd, described how 860 building workers were at the front line and that 36 had died during the conflict.

'We've taken over the care of their families and found them suitable flats,' he said.

Some 72 of his members were living in Germany, but those in Tuzla were living in difficult conditions and received little in wages.

He emphasised that the workers of Tuzla were not being given aid by humanitarian organisations. They had had to go to Split themselves to collect aid in six trucks. There, they were asked for money and, as they did not have any, had to stay in the city for 30 days until they could raise it. On the way back to Tuzla they were robbed in Prozor and reached their home town with no aid.

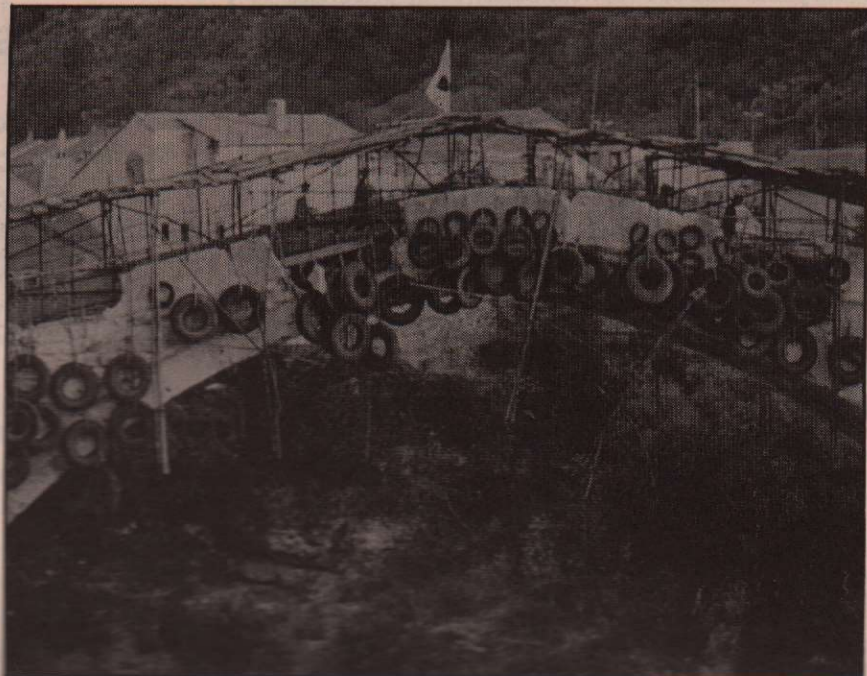
'Workers would like the war to stop as quickly as possible,' he said. 'Without production they cannot live.'

Within the Tehnograd organisation Muslims, Serbs and Croats worked together despite the Serbian and Montenegrin 'criminals'.

The president of the Tehnograd workers asked for Workers Aid to broaden its activities beyond the miners and also asked for possibilities of work outside Bosnia to be investigated. In the past, building workers from Tuzla had gone for work to Iran, Iraq, Germany and Libya.

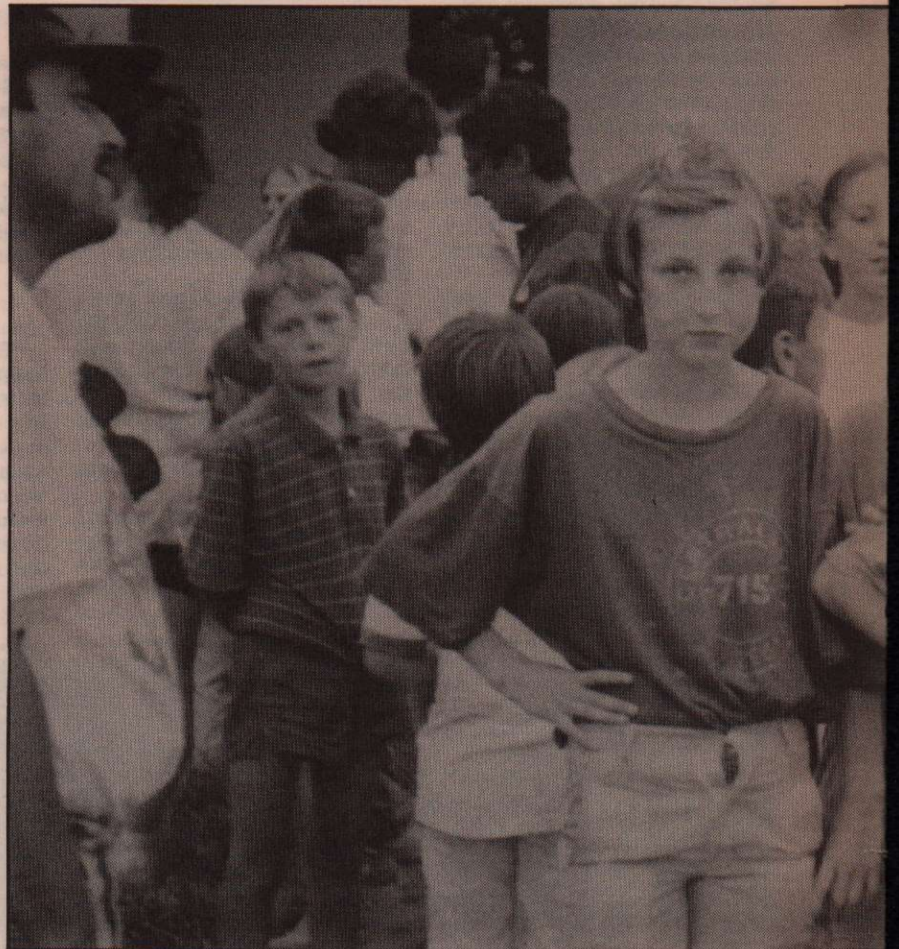
The president of the electricity-generating plant described how before the war the 1,200 workers in the industry in Tuzla had produced 42 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina's electricity. This level of production used 5.5 million tonnes of coal a year and employed 6,000 miners.

Since the war started production had fallen to 10 per cent of capacity. There had been support from British government agencies, mainly the Overseas Development



Mostar last year: those who walk across risk their life

Tuzla: a hu



Tuzla children milling around as the Workers Aid trucks are unloaded

Agency, which supplied spare parts.

The plant had been shelled six times, once with a land-to-land missile. Great damage had been sustained but had been quickly repaired. Production generally restarted within five to six days, using local workers and facilities.

The president of the generating plant stressed that the war was not a civil war but an act of aggression by the Serbs, Montenegrans and the Bosnian Serbs.

From the beginning the trades unions in Tuzla had called on all employees to defend Bosnia. A great number responded and had joined small military units. A few workers had remained behind for war production. The president thought that the war would come to an end very soon because the country was exhausted.

The president of the only rock-salt mine in the whole of the former Yugoslavia described how, of the 730 workers before the war, 430 remained; some 300 had joined the aggressor.

Production was carried out 600 metres below ground. Rock-salt was used for roads and industry, and brine was sent to salt-works and other chemical industries as a raw material.

He was thankful that the convoy had come to Tuzla to see the living and working conditions of the people in the town.

After the war broke out in Bosnia, the salt miners managed to continue production for the factories. Unfortunately these plants did not have the other materials necessary for it to continue and were not able to pay for the salt. Now 290 workers continue in the salt mines

Mostar: a

WHEN a delegation of six set out from Croatia to get permission for the Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy to travel through Bosnian-Croat territory, we didn't expect the clear examples of the divisions ripping Bosnia-Herzegovina apart that we saw.

As we drove along the hill road to the east of Mostar and looked down we could see that the war in Bosnia was one against people and not property. While most of the industrial plant remained standing, almost every house or place of worship had been shelled. More than half had no roof.

When we went down into east Mostar the impact became greater. The place was in ruins. The

people — old men, women and children — carried on as if things were normal. The young men have all been called to serve in the Bosnia-Herzegovinan army.

East Mostar is a Muslim area — the predominant flags were green with the star and crescent of Islam. There were very few flags with the Bosnian shield. Unfortunately multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina seems to have been destroyed in this region.

Militant

With the destruction of their homes it's not hard to see why the local people have turned to militant Islam. The reason becomes even

living in age jail



and the rest are in the Bosnian army.

The road construction workers' president described their work in removing the remnants of vehicles from battlefields and repairing the roads. These workers also build roads through woods — all part of the work of 'defending our state'.

'As the free territory was enlarged around Tuzla so our activity became more necessary,' he said. 'Our obligation to the Bosnia-Herzegovina army meant that we had to restart production at the Stupari quarry.'

The road construction workers' president was concerned that after two and a half years of war, and with winter coming on, they were left without machines or equipment.

'We will need foreign loans and grants to reconstruct and revive

our organisation,' he said.

A member of the Bosnia-Herzegovina presidency, effectively a government spokesperson, described how workers had not been paid for two and a half years.

'Besides humanitarian aid we would like the conditions to be able to produce by our labour,' he said. 'Few people can buy in the shops or market. The majority depend on aid only.'

He was convinced that it was only by the Bosnian peoples' own work that the situation would be changed.

A salt worker at the meeting said that the coal miners represented the working class. The trades unions had been ruined, along with the town and the companies. Many union members had been killed and many were now at the front line.

'I want to affirm our trades unions,' he said. 'I want immediate co-operation. To establish relations between unions, districts, organisations, etc., internationally. All of our problems must be put into one programme. The unions will get great support when they spread the truth.'

The salt worker said that there was a need to go beyond advocating better conditions and visits. Often this involved no more than words and brought no visible role for the trades unions in Tuzla.

'Trade unionism is a world-wide movement,' he said. Yet the achievements of trades unions in Tuzla had been gained in isolation. The blockade of Tuzla had meant that there was no communication between the trade union head office in Sarajevo and the district in Tuzla.

city of contrast

clearer when you go into west Mostar where the Catholic Croats live.

There has been no arms embargo on Croatia and weapons were relatively easy to get for the Bosnian Croats. The buildings in west Mostar are hardly touched. Occasionally you see a wall that has been hit, but that's about it.

The best 'military vehicles' used by the Bosnian forces are Yugoslav cars, based on the Fiat 127, which have been covered with camouflage paint. Most Bosnian soldiers have to hitch-hike if they can — or walk!

In west Mostar, post offices are open, phones are available and cafes serve beer and other refreshments. Life goes on.

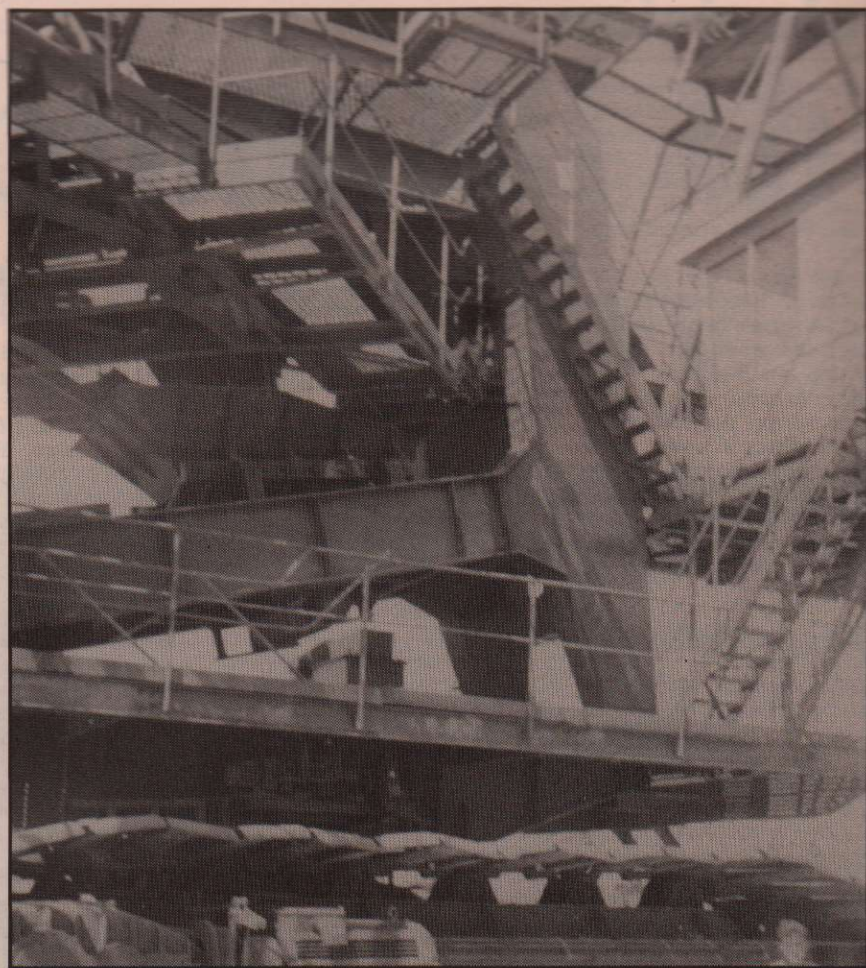
The journey between east and west Mostar is not easy. The three bridges, one medieval, across the river have been blown up. 'Normal' traffic has to cross a pontoon bridge built by the Spanish battalion (Spanbat) of the United Nations Protection Force. Vehicles then have to make a long detour around the demilitarised zone on a dry, dusty dirt track.

A Spanbat escort took us through the demilitarised zone, which reminds you of the pictures of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lamp-posts at crazy angles. Buildings burnt out, with no roofs or windows. And suddenly the destruction stops and you are in west Mostar, near all the government offices.

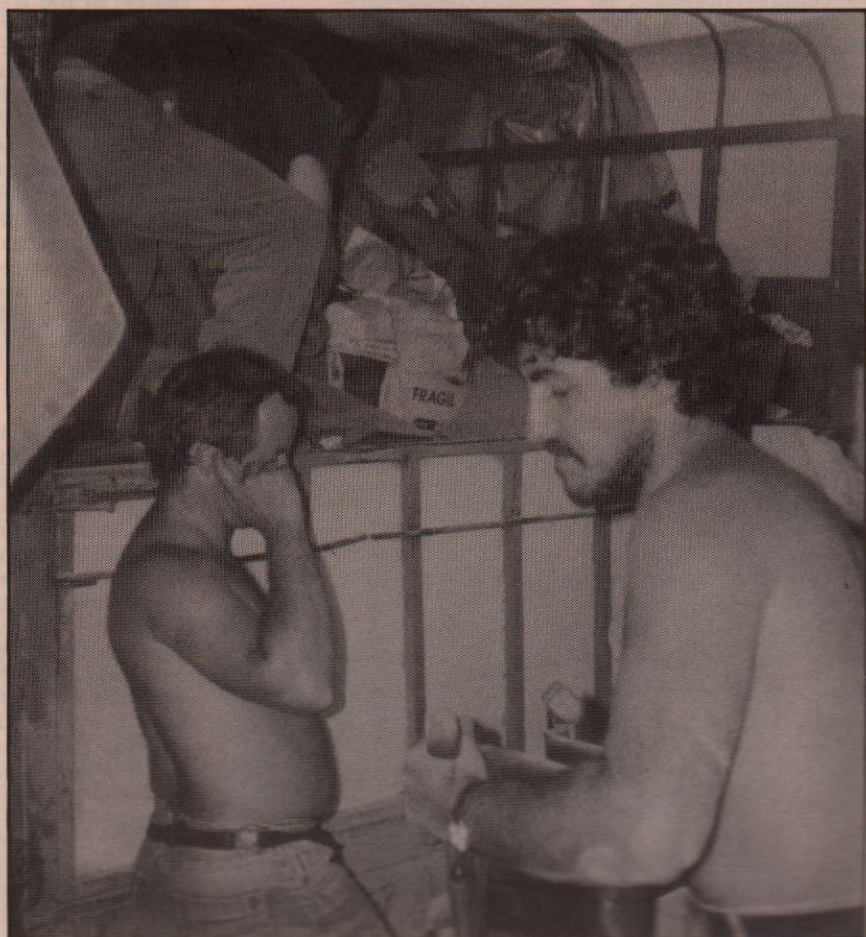
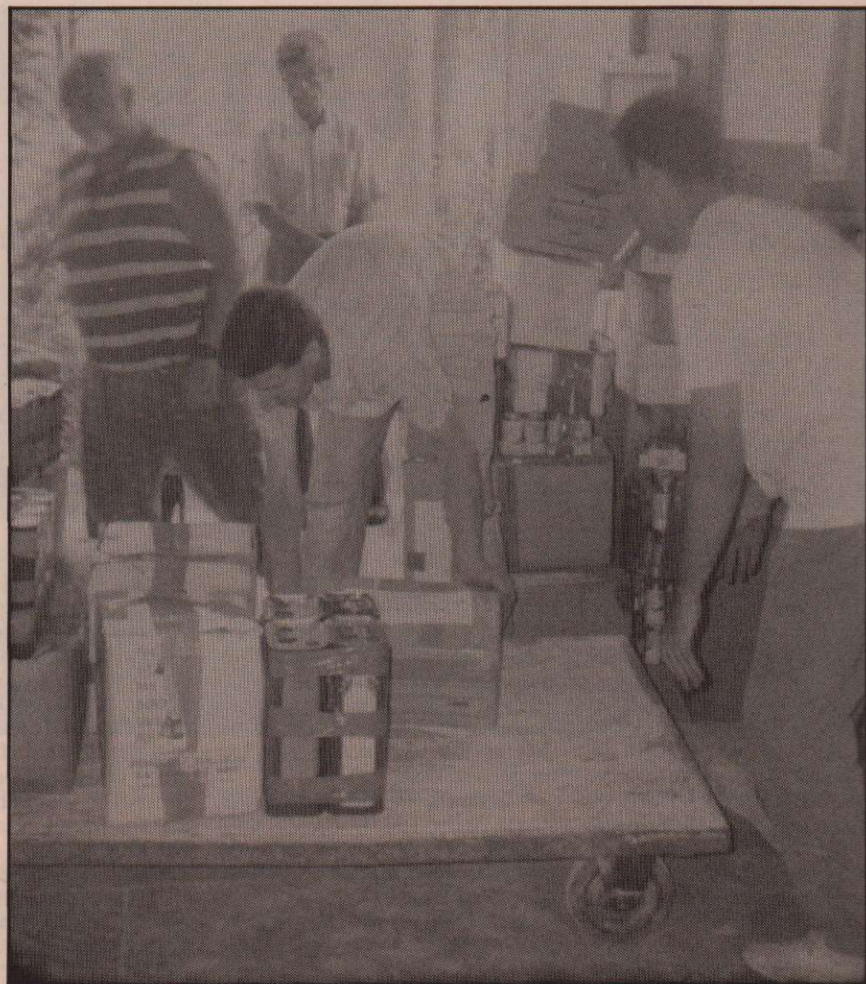
I tried taking photographs from inside the truck. But, when we were arrested for 19 hours by Bosnian-Croat (HVO) forces outside Caplina, the film was confiscated. The pictures were not returned. It's not surprising that the HVO does not want pictures showing the contrast between west and east Mostar to get out.

Rough

I don't suppose the pictures would have been very good — the road was too rough — but I wanted to bring back some impression of the contrast between the two halves of Mostar. Writing this is second best.



Open-cast mining equipment at the only working mine in the Tuzla region



Aid being unloaded at the Tuzla miners' warehouse before being distributed

Television

IF THE words 'TV mini-series' usually denote some ghastly kitsch concoction, often derived from a blockbuster novel, the phrase 'TV film' is slightly less ominous, as some US films made for TV have been of high quality.

Several years ago the TV production of 'Lonesome Dove' amazed everyone with its excellence, and went into many critics' top ten Westerns. This was partly because of the quality of the script, derived from Larry McMurty's novel, but also the superb acting by Robert Duvall, Tommy Lee Jones and Anjelica Huston. These three actors gave restrained and subtle performances, perfectly suited to TV.

Mesmerising

Another good example of the TV film could be seen in the US production 'To Catch a Killer' (BBC1, 18-19 August). This was yet another film about a serial killer, but it was dominated by a mesmerising performance by

Brian Dennehy. Dennehy is a fine cinema actor, but here he had scaled his performance down admirably. Gradually Dennehy shed the persona of an affable businessman, and revealed something icy, mad and violent beneath. Dennehy always has a massive screen presence, but in this film he had to rely less on his physicality, than on the use of his face. Chamber music rather than opera.

The contemporary obsession with serial killers — on TV, in the cinema and in books — doesn't seem so surprising to me. Characters such as Gacy in 'To Catch a Killer', or Hannibal Lecter in 'Silence of the Lambs', strike me as brilliant metaphors for US capitalism, which literally kills people *en masse*, never mind serially.

Killing wholesale

Review by Roger Horrocks

Dennehy's performance made me reflect on the nature of TV acting, which is quite different from acting for cinema or in the theatre. Everything is more claustrophobic: the camera picks up tiny details, so that the actor must underact rather than overact. 'Method' acting looks wildly over the top on TV.

This also means that some cinema films shown on TV look quite odd: their sheer size and spectacle is absurdly shrunken, and the acting can look overdone. For example, many of the great Westerns come across poorly on TV: their essentially mythic and utopian nature is lost, as the great landscapes —

which tend to dwarf the actions of men — are themselves miniaturised on the 'box'.

But some cinema films look very good on TV: a recent example being 'Dangerous Liaisons' (BBC2, 29 August) which, based as it is on a stage play, depends on the close observation of several characters. John Malkovich in particular gives a dazzling performance as the perfidious but ultimately self-destructing Viscomte. This is a claustrophobic world of sexual intrigue and ferocious back-stabbing, and it looked ravishing on TV.

Still on the theme of TV acting, I have been admiring a performance quite different

from Dennehy's. Richard Wilson in 'One Foot in the Grave', now being repeated (BBC1, Saturday), has the benefit of a splendidly surreal script, but he is a marvel to watch as an actor. Watch his body as he potters round the house: stiff, jerky, rather autistic — he accurately conveys the sense of a man ludicrously wrapped up in his own paranoia.

Marvellous

British TV has an astonishing range of actors such as Wilson, who rarely appear in the cinema, for example the sinister Tom Bell, who was marvellous in the 'Prime Suspect' films, or, perhaps my favourite TV actor, Michael Kitchen.

One of the pleasures of



Tom Bell: sinister

watching 'The Bill' is to admire the fine young actors who play the villains, drug-dealers and delinquents so beloved of the series. Some of them are astonishingly good — I hope 'The Bill' is the first rung on the ladder for them, and not a graveyard.

Provincial sightings

TOM OWEN has been looking at art exhibitions in Sheffield and the surrounding countryside

A LONG-ESTABLISHED conundrum: is it the metropolis or the province that forms the 'character' (or individuality) essential to a vibrant human culture?

Urban church, temple or mosque, Court and university have all been seen as centres of literacy, sophistication, patronage and enlightenment. On the other hand, these human institutions have also generated obscurantism, privilege, and bureaucratic barbarism.

Some writers and artists have seen the village and the provincial town as centres of 'real living', of 'community' (that most abused of words). They have also been the sites of cruel prejudice and ignorance.

For many Europeans and others this traditional dichotomy has become a matter of the mind rather than of social reality. Even aristocratic and courtly cultures depended on the often subversive 'folk' art of the 'naïve' or profane popular carnival.

Since the advent of imperialism, capitalism has virtually dissolved these cultural definitions, especially in the advanced metropolitan states.

WHEN discussing my next contribution to this paper with a 'London comrade' — also, I assure you, an ex-provincial — we agreed that I should write about some of the art exhibi-

tions on offer in the provinces.

As I have only meandered through provincial places this summer, I will dwell on some of the sightings tucked away in Sheffield and South Yorkshire.

Starting at home, there are two interesting exhibitions in Sheffield.

The first, 'Worlds in a Box', is a travelling show, first exhibited in Edinburgh and later to be seen in Norwich and London.

I reassure readers that this is not an *ad hoc* assembly of bricks and packing-cases but a serious and often witty exploration of the use of the box by modern artists.

Spanning the 20th century, it starts with the Dadaists and Surrealists and moves through the Nouveau Réalistes to the 1960s Pop artists.

Curiously, the exhibition is centred on the work of the little-known American artist Joseph Cornell (1903-1972).

Cornell lived in the Queens suburb of New York all his life as a virtual domestic recluse. He was influenced by the work of Max Ernst and Surrealists, which he came across in New York libraries and galleries.

Cornell's nostalgic preference for *fin de siècle* bric-à-brac led him to develop a contained, formal, visual poetic somewhat removed from the more disturbing juxtapositions of the Surrealists.

They not only took the famil-

iar everyday objects and rendered them, in Man Ray's words, 'totally useless', but used defamiliarisation to explore the psychic territories of dreamscape and the twilight regions of consciousness.

What is characteristic in their work is an uneasy combination of cleverness, a comic sense of the irrationality of capitalism, and a deeply disturbing perception of the horror that lurks beneath the mundane surface of alienated life.

For the Surrealists the box is the ironic statement of the containment of their free play. And many of the star performers are present in this exhibition: Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, and many lesser-known contemporaries.

It is also pleasing to see the work of the former Leeds engineering worker Antony Earnshaw, shown here in the full context of the tradition he has sustained.

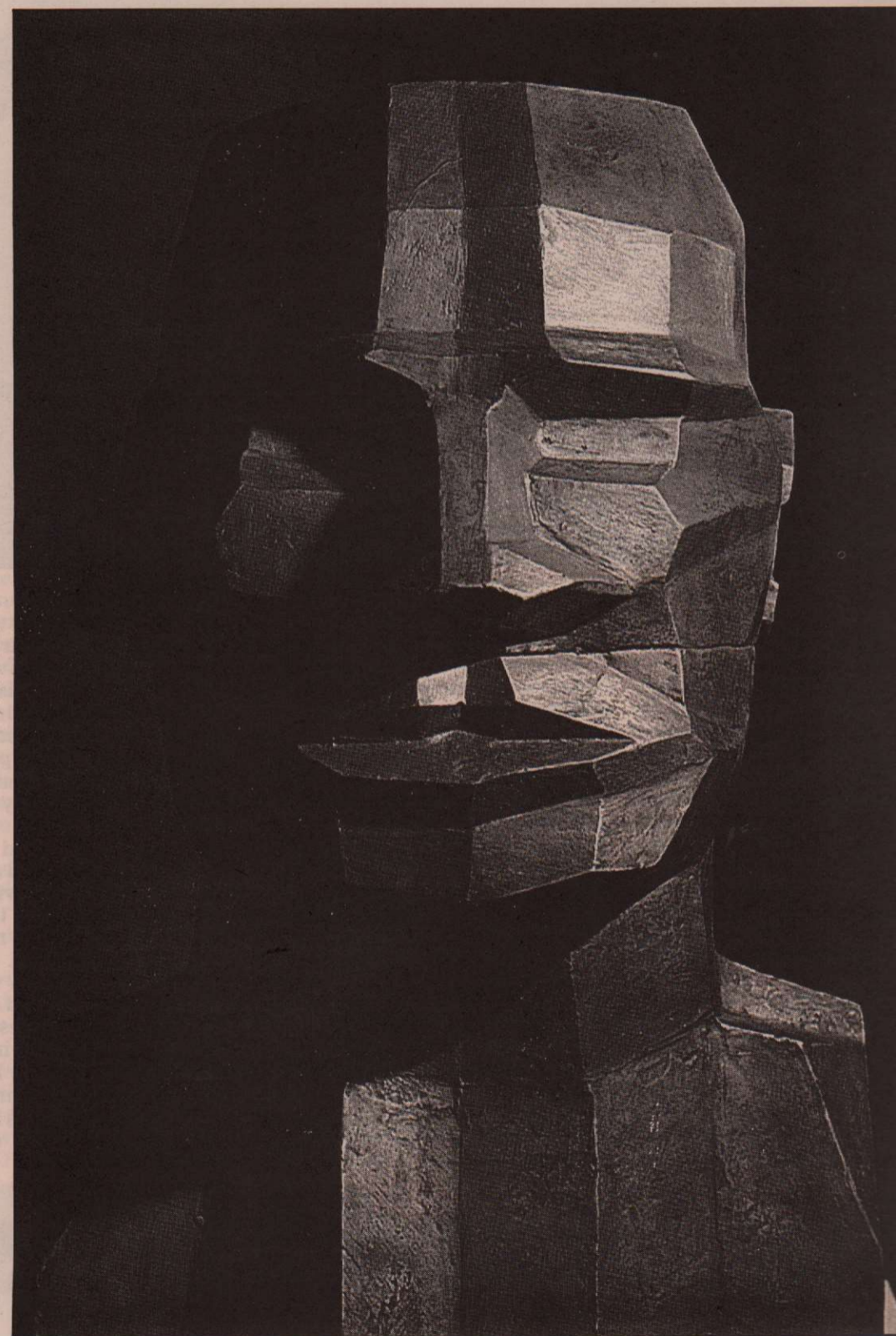
There are other 'boxers' here too, from the New York school and the Pop-art movement: Oldenburg, Rivers, Rauschenburg and Yoko Ono. Some of the later work has a confused sense of distance, an uncritical celebration of commodity packaging, an aestheticisation of the banal.

This is a 'concept' or 'theme' exhibition, but does offer a fascinating viewpoint on a comprehensive range of 20th-century art.

IF you are tired of being boxed in by Sheffield and the Graves Art Gallery, take to the open road and go up the M1 as far as the former Houghton Main colliery, and then turn off left to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Bretton Country Park.

There you will have an opportunity to see the grand statements of British modern sculpture in the work of Henry Moore, Elisabeth Frink and Eduardo Paolozzi.

The Moore sculptures are to be found in a huge field, set appropriately at considerable distance from each other with children playing on them and sheep grazing around them. It is the space of the upper Dearne valley stretching to the high Pennine moors and open light that allows the statues to work on our senses.



Eduardo Paolozzi's Double Lifesize Head at Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Moore's reclining figures and flowing abstractions like 'The Oval with Points' surprise you with their tensions at one moment and their harmony at another.

I believe he is one of the most sensuous of English modernist sculptors, shaping metal as if smoothing flesh — and it is this that makes him a profoundly humanist artist in the best sense.

Elisabeth Frink's work has a much more formal garden setting. Her huge enigmatic heads are perched on the stone balustrades overlooking a lawn where just-larger-than-life bronze naked men are caught in a variety of postures: turning,

contemplating, running, or riding a horse. There are also animals: a dog, a hog, and two splendid reclining water buffalo.

The bronze men have a curious timeless quality, a suggestion of the Neanderthal in some, intense concentration and lively intelligence in others; but all have a strangely familiar aura of human activity.

The other Bretton exhibition worth a visit is the 70th birthday exhibition of the Edinburgh artist Eduardo Paolozzi. This charts his career with a display of sculptures, maquettes and paper work from 1947 to the present day.

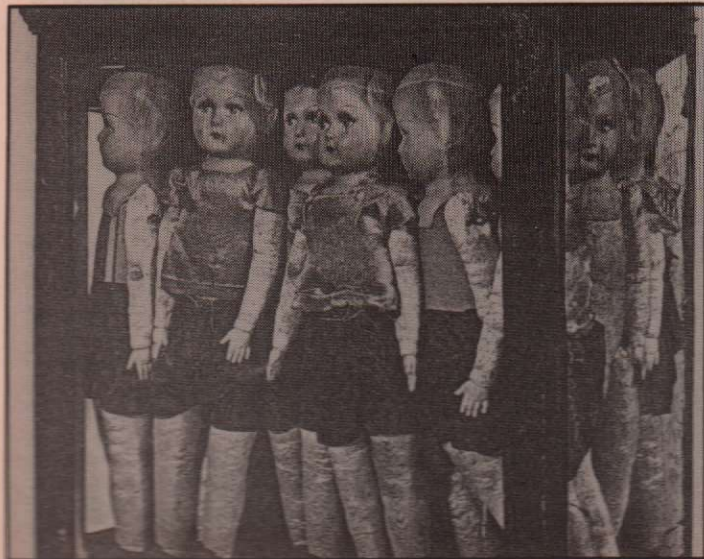
The small heads start with a

smooth mannequin head, reminiscent we are told of the false Maria of Fritz Lang's film 'Metropolis'. Then we have an intricate range of faceted cubist faces.

For the moment all these 'provincial sightings' are free of charge, except for the car-parking facilities at Bretton.

They represent an aspect of that tradition of 'civil' society which 19th-century British capitalism engendered through its regions and provinces. How long these vestiges will remain is a problem embedded in the present crisis of UK plc.

Peter Fryer's Personal Column will return next week.



Living in a box: Arman's The Village of the Damned 1962

Edinburgh Festival

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

'ALL the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players' seems to be the message — if message there is — in Luc Bondy's production of Peter Handke's 'The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other', a 'play without words', which drew the drama programme at the 1994 Edinburgh Festival to a close.

Shakespeare argued the point at the end of a century (the 16th) very different from our own. And he used fine poetry, Handke and Bondy confine themselves to action — to the doings of 33 actors playing over 400 characters in about 100 minutes, with only a minimum of sound and in a beautifully simple, vaguely Mediterranean-looking set.

Shakespeare spoke of the transience of an individual's life from infancy to senility. Handke and Bondy are concerned with observing mood, variety and incident over a wide range of human experience.

There are many identifiable types in the seamless web of their creation — executives, skateboarders, air hostesses, Alpine hikers and whores, to name but a few. And there are figures from mythology and his-

"A Celebration of the World's Teas" is an uncompromising piece of anti-theatre, in which a well-researched, multi-media presentation about the history of tea degenerates into a brawl and a warning against apathy in the face of approaching armageddon.'

tory, including the god Pan, Moses, Tarzan and Chaplin. But none dwells long enough on stage for us to think too much about them.

Bondy insisted that the show, impeccably done by the prestigious Schaubühne Am Lehniner Platz theatre from Berlin, is not part of a tendency to downgrade the importance of text as the basis of Western theatre. There is a text, he said — about 60 pages of stage directions. It is just that there are no words.

At Edinburgh's Festival Theatre, it went down surprisingly well. As to meaning, perhaps that should be approached via the knowledge that, in 1966, Handke wrote a play called 'Offending the Audience', in which four characters berated the punters for their conservatism.

Could it be that 1990s culture-

seekers able to afford £25 for the best seats are being confronted with the thought that it would be just as interesting to sit in a pavement café on a sunny day, watching the world go by and allowing the imagination to wander?

Universal Grinding Wheel, from Irish London, is a company which set out to offend, or at least unsettle, its regrettably small audience much more ruthlessly. Their Edinburgh Fringe show, 'A Celebration of the World's Teas', gets my 'Find of the 1994 Festival' award.

It is an uncompromising piece of anti-theatre, in which a well-researched, multi-media presentation about the history of tea degenerates into a brawl and a warning against apathy in the face of approaching armageddon.

The performers refuse to give any clues about whether the audience is meant to take notes, laugh, cry, or demand its money back. Some did the last — a triumph indeed for this talented and original troupe. They don't have the Schaubühne resources available to Handke and Bondy, but they do have more to say!

Revival

At the conclusion of the 'official' festival, 'The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other' was interestingly twinned with a revival of John Arden's 'Armstrong's Last Goodnight', which runs on at the Royal Lyceum Theatre until 17 September.

A narrative play first staged (in Glasgow and then at the newly established National Theatre in London) in the mid-1960s, it draws on a traditional ballad to tell the story of a marauding laird, Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie (well done by Stuart Hepburn), who became a victim of machiavellian statecraft at the court of Scotland's James V.

'Armstrong's Last Goodnight' is written in a form of Scots dialect by a Yorkshireman who now lives in Galway as an adopted Irishman. Set in 1528, it deals with the period when English military superiority over the Scots had been established, but the Scottish monarchy was prestigious enough to enter negotiations with Henry VIII, and to have a realistic programme for extending its law and order throughout the far-flung territories north of the Tweed.

Protestantism, the ideology which was later both to unite Scots and English and, through its different national forms, to keep them culturally distinct, makes its appearance in the shape of an evangelist (Andrew Barr in a part played by Ian McKellen in 1965), whose doctrines the Armstrongs adopt when to do so serves their political ends.

Sir David Lindsay (elegantly played by David Robb), the young James V's leading diplomat, who first tries to bring

Watching all the world go by



'Armstrong's Last Goodnight'. Background l to r, Michael Mackenzie (Willie Armstrong), Sandy Neilson (Tam Armstrong), Malcolm Shields (Archie Armstrong). Foreground l to r, Stuart Hepburn (John Armstrong) and David Robb (Sir David Lindsay) Photo: Sean Hudson

Armstrong aboard the ship of state and then dupes him to his death, is a Scots version of 'renaissance man': a scholar and poet as well as a crown servant. He was later to write 'Ane Satyr of the Thrie Estaitis' — a play warning of the dangers to the monarchical order of the impending Reformation — which was revived from centuries of obscurity by Tyrone Guthrie at the second Edinburgh Festival in 1948.

'Armstrong's Last Good-

night' belongs to a 1960s genre of playmaking, in part inspired by Guthrie's use of open-stage acting spaces such as that he created at the Church of Scotland's Assembly Hall, where his 'Thrie Estaitis' was produced. The Lyceum revival suffers from being behind a conventional proscenium arch. The action in Arden's piece needs to come out into the audience.

A splendidly dramatic forest setting (designed by Henk Schut) provides a kind of prime-

val depth, in contrast to the foreground castles, whose transience is suggested by two contrasting tubular structures.

Hewn

But the forest also over-romanticises the play: we see the wood out of which it is hewn, but, some vigorous ensemble acting notwithstanding, it remains difficult to discern the character of the particular trees.

The revival is worthwhile,

however. It is a reminder of a more confident period in theatre history, when (amongst other things) neo-Shakespearean narrative sweep, conveyed through an arduously crafted text, seemed compatible with a radical social vision. Although the Handke/Bondy enterprise is capable of thrusts of subversive observation — in the manner of Jacques Tati or even Woody Allen — it is too comfortably arch to offer signposts for the future.

Stalin's monkey business Socialist president was fascist

BY PAUL HENDERSON

RUSSIA's Stalinist regime in the 1920s was actively experimenting on the biological crossing of monkeys with humans, according to a report in the Spanish daily 'El Pais'.

The paper quotes documents published in 'Vechernya Moskva', describing the experiments of Ilya Ivanov, a professor of experimental zoology.

It appears that the authorities wanted to come up with a new type of human. Ivanov drew attention to the 'moral and religious prejudices which put serious obstacles in the way of his experimental work' before the 1917 Russian Revolution.

By 1926, he said, these prejudices had disappeared, and he received a grant of \$10,000 to begin work.

The experiments took place in Africa,

where chimpanzees were inseminated with human sperm. Eleven of the inseminated creatures were then taken to the USSR, but unfortunately they all died on the way. Autopsies found that none was pregnant.

Undaunted, Ivanov declared that the next stage of the experiment was to inseminate a human female with sperm from a chimpanzee. A nursery of chimps was to be set up for the purpose of inseminating Soviet women.

According to Ivanov, it was much easier to find women in the USSR 'willing' to be impregnated with the sperm of monkeys than it was in Africa.

'El Pais' says nothing about the outcome of the experiments, but what we see here is probably the tip of an iceberg.

Even in those early days it seems that the Stalinist regime was planning a programme of 'genetic engineering' that would have been impossible without a pool of helpless subjects.

FRANCE's 'Socialist' president Francois Mitterrand was a young fascist who worked enthusiastically for the Vichy regime which collaborated with the Germans during World War II, and only switched sides when it looked like the Allies might win.

This confirmation of long-standing rumour and suspicion comes in a new book 'Une Jeunesse Francaise [A French Youth]: Francois Mitterrand 1934-1947' by investigative journalist Pierre Pean.

Although Mitterrand claimed he had 'nothing to hide', Pean discovered that the Socialist Party leader had joined the Croix de Feu, a violent extreme-right movement, while a student. He was photographed on a 1935 demonstration which had banners saying 'Dehors let metèques' — 'Foreigners out'.

Mitterrand had friends among the

Cagoullards, fascist terrorists responsible for anti-Jewish attacks and assassinations. After World War II, as minister of the interior, he tried to get some Cagoullards out of jail.

In November 1941, as a loyal admirer of collaborator Marshal Petain and official in the Vichy regime, Mitterrand was awarded the Francisque, its highest honour. Among his friends was police chief Rene Bosquet, assassinated last year when due to stand trial for his part in rounding up French Jews for the concentration camps.

Switched

Mitterrand switched sides and attached his fortunes to the Gaullist resistance in 1943, a year later than he has usually pretended. By then the war had plainly turned in the Allies favour.

Many people have suspected that the French state's reluctance to bring to trial some of the worst Vichy collaborators and war criminals owed something to protection in high places. The book reveals that as late as 1986 Mitterrand had Bosquet to dinner. It might have been thought the ex-police chief's assassination was one way of sparing an embarrassing trial.

But now, ignoring the question of how his past remained so supposedly little-known for so long, Mitterrand and his admirers are making a virtue of his supposed frankness in assisting author Pean.

'In such turbulent times, when one is so young, it's difficult to choose,' he told the writer. 'I came out relatively well.' And others of his class, reassured by a patriotism that suited convictions to career, tell each other they would have done the same.

Army linked to Colombian death squads

COLOMBIAN trades unionists believe the country's army high command may be behind death squads that have murdered or threatened left-wing political activists and trades unionists.

Two previously unknown groups have claimed responsibility for the murder of Senator Manuel Cepeda Vargas on 9 August, and made death threats to several other people, including MPs, former left-wing guerrillas, and trades unionists.

A paramilitary group calling itself Muerte a Comunistas y Guerrilleros (MACOGUE) — Death to Communists and Guerrillas — claiming that it had killed Cepeda, also issued threats to Orlando Obregon, president of the CUT union confederation, Aida Abella of the Patriotic Union, Communist Party leaders, and others.

According to its statement, these people had 'taken advantage of the system's good nature'; they infiltrate the institutions which represent liberty and democracy in order to create terror and chaos... only when they are threatened and destroyed will they stop.'

On 9 and 10 August, several leaders of the Union Sindical Obreros (USO) trade union were threatened in a telephone call to its office at the Barrancabermeja oil refinery. The call came from a group calling itself Colombia sin Guerrillas, or COLSINGUE, which also claimed responsibility for killing Manuel Cepeda. Among union leaders threatened were Cesar Carrillo, the president of USO, and vice president Hernando Hernandez.

The murdered senator Manuel Cepeda had taken an active part in denouncing the involvement of the military high command in violations of human rights and an alleged campaign to eliminate political opposition and community activists.

Abella backed the charge that the military was involved, saying 'those responsible for the crime are not "dark forces"'. Those responsible for the murders carried out against the UP in Meta, in Uraba, and in the Magdalena Meta region hide in the barracks. Now they are simply shooting our leaders.'

Several political parties have called on President Samper to replace the military high command. Meanwhile, in a letter to the human rights organisation Amnesty International, Manuel Cepeda's son, Ivan Cepeda, said: 'My father's life was dedicated to the struggle for social justice, defence of human rights, and peace.'

He hoped the outcry over his father's murder would lead to an end of killings of opposition leaders in Colombia.



Shaukat Ali Kashmiri

THE Pakistan government has taken a leading Kashmiri militant into military custody it was confirmed by official sources to representatives of a Kashmiri political party last week.

The Jammu Kashmir Peoples National Party said its secretary-general, Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, a scholar and human rights activist, had been taken from his home in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, more than a week previously. They had now learnt that he was being held in an army camp near Rawalpindi, and it was reported by a reliable source that he was being tortured.

Kashmiris are fighting a war on two fronts, with most of their country under Indian occupation and other parts occupied by

Pakistan and China. The Pakistani authorities have divided the area under their control into two parts, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, placing the latter under direct rule. Shaukat Ali was planning to address a conference in London on the future of Gilgit Baltistan, and the struggle of oppressed nationalities in southern Asia.

BY DAVID DORFMAN

Pakistan state 'kidnapped' Kashmiri leader

Pakistan intelligence services have encouraged Muslim guerrillas in Indian-occupied Kashmir, with the dual object of taking over the whole country, and destroying democratic and secular forces.

Activist

The Jammu Kashmir People's National Party (JKPNP) is struggling for a united, independent Kashmir. A statement from its international wing, the Kashmir International Front, says 'Shaukat Ali Kashmiri is a scholar, a human rights and political rights activist' who 'has been in the vanguard of the

struggle for the restoration of human, civil and political rights of the people of Gilgit Baltistan for more than a decade.

'He stands for, as does the manifesto of his party, JKPNP, for the establishment of a sovereign, democratic and secular, United States of Kashmir.'

Attacking the Pakistani government's hypocrisy in protesting Indian violations of human rights while engaging in despicable acts itself, the JKPNP's London branch chairman, Afzal Tahir, said people in the Pakistan-occupied northern areas were being kept in the Dark Ages, without water supplies, electricity or education.

'Alarmed by the non-violent uprising in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir), the military bureaucratic alliance in Pakistan is feeling threatened,' the party warns. 'Therefore they have decided to crush the genuine aspirations of the people of this area by resorting to inhuman and barbaric methods to suppress the people.'

Fearing for Shaukat Ali's life, the Kashmir International Front is appealing for worldwide protests to the Pakistan government. They should be faxed to the Pakistan Embassy on 071-416 8417, FAO Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Copies to JKPNP on 081-521 2617.

Indonesian unions and lawyers under threat

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

FOUR Indonesian trades unionists are facing serious charges following strikes and riots in Medan, north Sumatra, earlier this year. In a separate case police have arrested a human rights lawyer, SH Munir, who successfully represented workers fighting wrongful dismissal. The four facing trial in Sumatra are Johannes Hutahaen, a workers' rights activist, Parlin Manihuruk, a workers' rights activist, Mughtar Pakpahan, the chair of the Indonesia Prosperous Labour Union (SBSI), and Maiyasyak Johan, a human rights lawyer.

Solitary

There are reports that Mughtar Pakpahan is being held in solitary confinement and denied family visits. He has been accused of 'incitement' of strikes and disorder, for which he could be sentenced to six years in jail.

More than 50 other workers detained after the strikes at Medan could be facing charges. The interior ministry has declared SBSI an 'illegal' organisation and banned the union from

carrying out any activity. The strikes in April lasted for ten days, and involved over 50,000 factory workers. Wages and union rights were the main issue. Many companies were not even paying the legal minimum wage, and the independent SBSI union had won support without gaining recognition.

Feelings were inflamed after a young worker, Rusli, who had been involved in a strike, was found dead in a river. Workers wondered if this was another state killing. But demonstrations remained fairly peaceful until first the riot squads and then the military moved in. Armoured vehicles and thousands of troops stood by while local SBSI leaders were arrested in police raids.

SH Munir, a lawyer at the Surabaya office of the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (LBH, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum) was

arrested late at night during a meeting with 14 workers in the town of Malang, East Java. After a two-hour interrogation at the local police station he was charged with organising a meeting without first obtaining police permission, an offence under article 510 of the Indonesian Criminal Code.

Munir's detention appears to have been directly related to his successful work for the 14 workers of PT Sido Bangun Lawang. In 1990, they had been dismissed after protesting before the local legislature about wage cuts and working conditions.

With the LBH's assistance they took the company to court for unfair dismissal. In April this year the supreme court found in their favour. The company is now seeking to challenge the decision. The meeting with Munir on the night of 19 August was to discuss the law suit.



GARLANDED in Jakarta. Tory Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd on a visit to the Indonesian capital. Britain is a major investor in Indonesia and is supplying the military dictatorship with weapons, including armoured vehicles and aircraft. (The wrongly captioned photo which appeared in last week's Workers Press showed riot police in Jakarta clubbing people who were protesting peacefully against the regime's closure of newspapers and magazines.)

News briefs

Brazil minister undone by loose talk

BRAZIL's finance minister has been forced to resign following the accidental transmission of a conversation in which he boasted of manipulating the economy to boost the chances of the main bourgeois candidate, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

The private chat before a television interview and accidentally overheard by viewers has thrown Brazilian politics into a turmoil on the eve of a general election.

Rubens Ricupero told an interviewer that the government's anti-inflation stabilisation plan was being used to help Cardoso's chances of election.

'I don't have any scruples. What is good we use to our advantage, what is bad we hide,' said Ricupero.

Initially captured only by viewers with satellite dishes the tape of the minister's indiscretion was later shown on all channels. Ricupero has in the past

presented himself as a man of great probity and one who regularly pops into church to pray.

It is the anti-inflation plan which the government claims is responsible for reducing unemployment to a claimed monthly rate of 5 per cent from its previous rate of 50 per cent.

Even before the latest scandal it was becoming increasingly clear to the voters that the government was openly using the machinery of state for its own electoral purposes.

One minister has pushed ahead with a controversial \$2 billion irrigation project in the north-east which has been condemned by experts but was expected to win votes.

Nigeria strike doubt

NIGERIA's oil workers seemed to be divided last week about whether the two-month-long strike in support of the presidential claimant Moshood Abiola had been suspended.

the white-collar oil union, Pengassan, denied that any decision had yet been taken to call off the strike, or to suspend it.

His position seemed to be in contradiction to statements made Arthur Onoviran who reported that a meeting of the executives of both unions had met and agreed to suspend the strike.

Oil workers struck on 4 July to force the military government to free Chief Abiola the person widely believed to have won last year's annulled election.

Many workers in Nigeria say that the reason for the turn in the strike is their feeling of isolation and a lack of support from the labour movement in other countries.

■ Picket in solidarity with Nigerian workers. Friday 30 September at 6pm. Nigerian High Commission, 9 Northumberland Ave, London WC2 5BX.

Organised by the Nigerian International Labour Solidarity Link. For more information contact ALISC at PO Box 256 London SE11 5TH. Tel: 081-202 6292.

Ukraine mine blast kills 24

A MINE explosion in south-eastern Ukraine has killed 24 coal miners and injured a further 15. The state media reported last week. Six of the 15 are reported to be in a critical condition.

The underground blast at the 'Slavyano-Serbskaya' mine, 14 miles from the industrial city of Lugansk, was believed to have been caused by the build up of coal dust, according to officials who were quoted by national TV.

The Ukraine government has promised to provide assistance to the families of the dead miners.

Poor safety standards and outdated equipment have contributed to a series of fatal accidents in mines in Ukraine's industrial basin — the Donbass region.

On 12 May miners were killed by a methane gas explosion in the region of Donetsk near Lugansk. Over 200 miners were killed last year in a series of accidents.

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