

Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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Tube workers flock to join RMT strike HIGH COURT STEPS UP UNION CRISIS

BOSNIA PICKET NEWS

Keep in touch with the campaign! Make sure you get each issue of the 'Bosnia Picket News' as it comes out (4 page A4 newsletter with news, views and information).

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Support multi-ethnic Bosnia

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* Note date change for Leicester demonstration

Bosnia Solidarity Campaign Bands for Bosnia

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Seven Little Sisters,
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Special guests

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THE HIGH COURT'S outlawing of the London underground workers' 48-hour strike once more brings to a head the crisis facing the trade unions and millions of workers.

For as rail union leader Jimmy Knapp said: 'It will soon be impossible to conduct a legitimate dispute in this country and that is unhealthy for any democracy.'

The court ruling concerned the right of recent recruits into the rail union RMT to take part in the strike.

BY GEOFF PILLING

Seven hundred underground workers have joined the union after the first successful ballot for strike action was conducted.

They include 137 train drivers whose participation in the strike would have brought large parts of the system a halt.

Knapp stressed that the dispute was not over and that a fresh ballot for strike action would now be conducted. He predicted an even bigger majority for strike action in the forthcoming ballot.

At the centre of the dispute is the threat by London Underground to employ part-time workers to supplement the labour force as and when it sees fit. Underground workers are also demanding a 6-per-cent wage rise and paid meal breaks.

The 700 who have joined the union over the last weeks have done so knowing that they were faced with a strike. This is an expression of the beginning of a new temper in

the working class, especially among younger workers.

For years the trade union leaders have either slavishly complied with the anti-union laws or have tried to walk round them.

As Labour leader Tony Blair made clear at the recent TUC congress, a Labour government in office will retain the anti-union laws.

But the underground workers have again shown that important sections of workers are prepared to take on the employers and the Tory government.

New party campaign

Last week Workers Press said that it would announce this week the next step in our campaign for the working class to 'form a new party that really fights for its needs'.

Unfortunately, due to a number of technical difficulties this has not been possible, but we plan next week to keep our promise!

PETER CURTIS

MEMBERS of the Workers Revolutionary Party send their condolences to the family, friends and comrades of Peter Curtis, who died on 11 September 1995.


Peter joined the Trotskyist movement in 1974 and carried out most of his party work in Hackney, East London. In 1985, he was amongst the minority loyal to expelled leader, G. Healy. We remember his self-sacrificing dedication to the movement and regret his death at the age of 47.

Tickets now available THE FUTURE OF MARXISM

A Series of 10 Lectures

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WORLD PREMIERE BY DAVID EDGAR



BENEFIT FOR BOSNIA
Sunday 1 October, 2pm
Young Vic Theatre

PENTECOST

by David Edgar

Nadja Ridic describes herself as a typical atheist Bosnian Muslim. In 1993 she told an interviewer:

'Gentlemen, you have so far only taken pictures of Muslim women wearing veils who are hungry and tired. So the world is afraid of them. I would like to show you what the modern Bosnian Muslim woman looks like. She is a citizen of Europe, whether Europe wishes to accept it or not.'

Even in 1993 Tuzla was swelled with refugees. Since then hundreds of thousands more people, Serbs, Muslims and Croats are homeless and starving.

ON 1 OCTOBER AT 2PM, the staff of the Young Vic theatre and the cast of *Pentecost*, my play about European refugees, will perform a benefit performance for our fellow Europeans in Tuzla and the rest of Bosnia.

David Edgar, Playwright, August 1995


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INDEPENDENT and INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Labour and the NHS

THREE REPORTS in the space of a week have carried the same central message: the welfare state should finally and explicitly be abolished. In future the state should provide a basic 'safety net' or 'core service', after which those who could afford to pay should receive better treatment and those with no money should go without.

Those with money would be able to jump the treatment queue, forcing those without even further down the line and at the same time those with money would be able to pay for what the state deemed to be 'non-essential' treatment.

* * * * *

Naturally, the leaders of the Tory and Labour parties made the same ritualistic noises: the NHS would remain a service freely available to all.

This is worthless talk. There have already been serious inroads into the NHS. Under the Tories private medicine has been allowed to expand, services have been run down for the chronically sick and the elderly.

Margaret Beckett, Labour's health frontbencher, called for the 're-nationalisation of the NHS'. She no doubt had the forthcoming Labour Party conference and elections to the party's national executive in mind. But her ringing words should be taken with a large pinch of salt.

For one of the reports calling for the effective dismantling of the NHS came from the so-called 'think tank' Healthcare 2000. The 12 members who drew up the report include Patricia Hewitt, deputy director of the Institute of Public Policy Research and a member of Labour leader Tony Blair's kitchen cabinet.

While Hewitt put her name to the final report, Professor Sir Leslie Turnberg, president of the Royal College of Physicians, refused to sign, saying that it travelled too far in the direction of privatisation. 'I would have difficulty sustaining that position as president,' he added.

But Turnberg is hardly a man of the left. For in refusing to support the Healthcare 2000 proposals, he agreed that it was necessary to distinguish between 'effective' and 'non-effective' treatment.

That Hewitt, undoubtedly after consultation with Blair, can back such proposals shows again how far the leaders of the Labour Party have swung to the right.

* * * * *

The NHS is the one single thing that millions of people associate with the Labour Party.

The 1945 Attlee government set up the NHS that was supposed to provide free health care 'from cradle to grave'. Yet it was these very Labour leaders who made the first breach in that principle when, in 1951, they introduced prescription charges. It was on these grounds that Aneurin Bevan and Harold Wilson resigned from the government.

Now Blair and company are amongst the keenest advocates of plans that in fact involve the dismantling of the NHS. They are determined to prove to the bankers and leaders of big business that they will not flinch when it comes to the task of destroying the gains that the working class have made in the past.

* * * * *

The blunt fact is that capitalism cannot any longer grant even the inadequate health care that the NHS provided. Those, including representatives of the Labour Party such as Hewitt, who advocate a 'two-tier' system, blame the developments of medical science and the fact that people are living longer for the inability of the state any longer to provide for health care on the present scale.

What could be clearer? Science develops and therefore more treatments to cure disease become possible. Meanwhile people are living longer and are becoming a greater burden on the state. Capitalism has no room for the sick, the disabled, the old, the permanently unemployed. If possible it would like to rid society of these 'unproductive' elements. As the crisis of the capitalist system deepens, the need to do just that becomes ever-more imperative.

That the Labour Party leaders back such plans, and when in government will undoubtedly implement them, is a graphic illustration of the historical character of the crisis which faces the working class.

Letters

More Letters
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WE WELCOME LETTERS
SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS,
PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB
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Engels and defeatism

WORKERS PRESS omitted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Nevertheless, the fact that the other side did not win enables its writers to discuss that conflict freely (as Orwell wrote, 'wars not only have causes, they also have results') and even to bandy about the term 'fascist' in a way no Gauleiter would have tolerated. Nor is the World War I a 'reserved' subject, as it might well have become.

Peter Fryer (9 September) can approvingly refer to Karl Liebknecht saying: 'The enemy was at home.' (Actually, Liebknecht said: 'the main enemy [der Hauptfeind...] is in our own country,' which has a different implication.)

Liebknecht's name has come to be inseparable from Rosa Luxemburg's, owing to their tragic common fate. In her famous 'Junius Pamphlet' of 1916 she put forward a sort of 'proletarian military policy' for Germany.

'Socialists', she wrote, 'are obliged to defend their country in great historical crises... In this war victory and defeat would be equally fatal', and called for 'arming of the people' and the lifting of 'all limitations on political rights, since only a free people can adequately defend its country'.

Lenin, at the time, found Luxemburg's line very odd. (In October 1918, however, we find him instructing the Soviet representative in Switzerland to have her little work published in four languages.)

Luxemburg was merely updating the advice given by Engels to Bebel in his letter of 13 October 1891: 'If the danger of war increases, we can tell the government that we should be ready, if they made it possible for us by decent treatment, to give our support against the foreign enemy — on the presupposition that they will fight relentlessly, and use every means, even revolutionary means. If Germany is attacked from east and west, all means of

self-defence are good. The existence of the nation is then at stake, and we too have a position to maintain, and a future which we have won by hard fighting.'

Early in World War I, Inessa Armand told Lenin that German comrades were quoting this and similar statements by Engels to oppose the 'defeatist' line. Lenin explained to her that 'in 1891 there was no imperialism; imperialism began, apparently, with the Spanish-American war.'

What exactly had happened between 1891 and 1898 to account for such an epoch-making change in the political situation, with consequent effects on socialist policy, he did not make clear. All I can think of as possibly relevant is the death of Engels in 1895.

Brian Pearce
New Barnet

Getting the definition straight

I HAVE to agree with Raymond Challinor that Serbia is not a fascist state (2 September) and in particular his argument that many groups on the left 'promiscuously fling around the word "fascist"'. It is in danger of becoming merely a term of general abuse.

That has always been a problem on the left, this tendency to lump together every reactionary as a 'fascist'. The Carlists were 'fascists', Horthy in Hungary was a 'fascist', Salazar in Portugal was a 'fascist' and Franco in Spain was a 'fascist' (and if Thatcher shared Franco's hatred of unions, she too must be a 'fascist').

Writing in the introduction to Trotsky's 'Fascism — What it is and how to fight it' one of his followers warns of the over-use of the term 'fascist' to the point where it becomes meaningless. This is absolutely correct and, in fact, in many cases on the left, this is exactly what has happened.

An accurate definition of a fascist society is given by R.A.H. Robinson in his work 'Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945' in which he

argues that a fascist state is a mass-mobilising movement aiming at 'the complete conquest of power and seeking the fullest control over all aspects of life in a polity by means of a single-party system'.

Robinson goes on to state, quite correctly, that a fascist regime is one in which a fascist political movement is dominant. By that definition, where is the fascist party in Serbia?

Now Milosevic may be a nasty piece of work who uses nationalist jargon to justify ethnic atrocities, but he himself is not a 'fascist', nor is the regime he leads, opportunistic and unpleasant though it is.

You cannot describe a regime as 'fascist' simply because it carries out massacres, as this would mean that Cromwell's Republic was 'fascist' due to its actions in Ireland, to say nothing of the majority of all political systems and governments in the 20th century.

This is not merely an academic point, but a serious issue of clarification. If the left are to develop tactics to confront the forces of reaction, we must first have clear definitions of that enemy.

Ken King
Independent Crawley
Socialists

'Don't print this letter'

AFTER my first year as a mature student I'm already more than £2,000 in debt. Despite this I've enclosed payment for another 50 issues of Workers Press — it's a good paper and well worth the money.

However, it's an annoying pain in the arse to read references to the Socialist Workers' Party — several articles, columns and letters all in the one issue.

If you don't consider them an important force in the labour movement then you shouldn't imply that status by continual references and I feel that the facile half-joke comments only make Workers Press appear pathetic and factional, like the other papers of the left.

Have a wee practice at editing out the SWP by not printing this letter....

Paddy
Cambridge

Our policy on Bosnia

IF Dave Finch (Letters, 16 September) checks again, he'll see that Bob Archer did not claim Simon Pirani had 'far less day-to-day contact with Bosnia than many'. He was quoting what Simon himself had said.

Why Simon introduced his opinions with such disclaimers, or employed that particular phrase, I've no idea. Not many people have had 'day-to-day contact' with Bosnia in the past three years, for obvious reasons. Some Bosnians did not know where members of their families were, or if they were alive or dead.

Neither Bob Archer nor myself suggested it was a 'crime' to quote the bourgeois press. We queried the uncritical use made of it. I explained why I thought the 'Sunday Mirror's' story about fascists' day trips might be dodgy.

I agree with Dave Finch that we must campaign for withdrawal of foreign troops from Bosnia, lifting the arms embargo, and opposition to any deal which dismembers Bosnia. This is our policy.

Dave alludes to the way people with disagreements were treated by the late Gerry Healy. I worked on the 'News Line' from 1976-78 and was sacked by Healy. I can testify that he not only exaggerated disagreements but discovered ones a person hadn't even thought of!

But I don't recall 'News Line' ever printing letters, let alone comments it disagreed with. Nor, with its full-time staff and news-agency tapes, did it encourage workers to send in reports of their struggles (ask comrades like Bill Hunter how they were treated).

We welcome news and articles on any of the subjects Dave Finch mentioned, and more!

Charlie Pottins
London SW2

Open Women's meeting on Bosnia, Saturday 30 September: What is to be Done? Keynote speaker Lynne Jones; participants from Women in Black, Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia, European Dialogue, Committee for Peace in the Balkans, and more. 2pm-6pm, Van Zuyt Centre, 152 Arlington Rd. London NW1. (Camden Town tube). £2 (£1 concess). Panel, workshops, bookstall, photo exhibition.

Memorial meeting for Maire O'Shea

Irish republican and fighter

Speaker: Bernadette McAlliskey

Saturday 18 November, 2pm-4pm (to be followed by a social)
At the Mechanics' Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1
(opposite Chorlton Street bus station, side entrance)

Maire O'Shea died on 6 March 1995. She represented a tradition of Irish republicanism that was both radical and secular. Her active struggle for a united Ireland made her reject all deals with the British state. Maire became nationally known in this country when she was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and charged with conspiracy. After a major campaign, which was supported by her trade union and in which she repeated her politics to the jury in court, Maire was acquitted.

Irish politics, the politics for a free and united Ireland, were central to Maire's life. However she was a fighter against injustice wherever she saw it and she saw it everywhere. In particular her professional life as a psychiatrist was also deeply political. For many years she fought against a system that defines and drives people mad and then imprisons them for life in top-security mental hospitals. She understood the connections between racism and mental health and established in Birmingham a therapeutic centre for black people. In Manchester she offered her professional help to black people hounded and distressed by immigration laws.

Maire was a supporter of all struggles by working people and was an active member of her own union ASTMS (MSF).

► Come to the memorial meeting. Honour Maire O'Shea and discuss how we can take forward those causes for which she fought

Organised by the Maire O'Shea Memorial Committee, c/o 1 Newton Street, Department 95, Manchester M1 1HW.

There is also a memorial concert being organised by the Troops Out Movement at 8pm, 16 September at the Trade Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham

Workers Revolutionary Party/Workers Press meeting 10th anniversary of the expulsion of G. Healy from the WRP

Saturday 7 October 1995, 2pm

Conway hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
(Holborn Underground) Doors open 1pm for refreshments.
Admission £1 (50p concessions)

The Workers Revolutionary Party is part of the Workers International, founded in 1990 for the reconstruction of the Fourth International. This meeting is called on the 10th anniversary of the expulsion from the WRP of Gerry Healy, together with a group of his supporters. For more than 25 years Healy had been the recognised leader of the WRP and its forerunners, and for most of that time of the International Committee. His political degeneration was marked by gross abuses, and he was charged with sexual attacks and physical violence against a number of comrades. He was guilty also of political slanders. He never appeared to answer these charges.

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

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

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

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Tube dispute: a war of all against all

BY AN INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

TH the British Rail and London Underground fragmentation, main rail unions seem hell-bent on following their own

courses of action which have little to do with members' interests.

The inability of the two unions involved, the RMT and ASLEF, to co-ordinate any kind of campaign, including industrial action, can only help management at the end of the day. This is

particularly so on the tube. The 1995 pay claim, now six months past its April implementation date, has now reached a point where the stakes are being increasingly raised.

The RMT had committed itself to a series of one-day strikes

spread over two days. It then suddenly cancelled the last strike in order to go to the arbitration service ACAS.

It threatened to hold a two-day strike action if no progress was made. So far ACAS has produced nothing for tube workers.

ASLEF balloted their members twice for industrial action, the second ballot being forced on them by London Underground management because they claimed they had 'improved' their offer.

The 'improvement', a fraction of a per cent on pay, was upheld by the courts and the original ballot declared invalid for continued action.

The second ballot repeated the earlier decision, but this has been turned into yet another ballot on another 'revised' offer by management.

This offer made no improvement on the 3 per cent on the table but did concede an hour off the day — in 1996! And this has to be financed by the introduction of part-time staff.

The ASLEF executive recommended this offer to its members who seemed likely to reject it before the High Court decision against the RMT (see front page).

Militant

Meanwhile, the RMT's 'join us and strike' campaign has recruited some of the more militant members of ASLEF who want to strike and who can't stomach crossing their colleagues' picket lines.

London Underground has issued all strikers with 'reminder' letters saying the strike was in breach of contract.

This was no surprise to strikers, but behind it was the threat, carried out, to hit the RMT with legal action if they encouraged those who were not part of the original ballot to go on strike.

The anti-democratic anti-union laws could now be used to launch a damages claim against the RMT on the scale of that which was used to so seriously savage the National Union of Mineworkers in the 1984-85 strike.

Hardly behind the scenes, the government insists that the 3 per cent pay ceiling for the public sector is not breached.

Struggling

Without challenging the government this leaves public-sector managers and union bureaucracies between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Tube workers are increasingly militant.

Negotiators are struggling to find improvements in conditions of service that will placate the workforce without breaking the government's pay ceiling.

Managers are under pressure from the Tory government to get yet further productivity increases out of the unions to prepare privatisation.

The Tory privatisation mania will certainly lead to a similar 'bone-picking' exercise to that carried out at British Rail.

This will not be easy — but sense and practicality count for nothing in these matters.

Surely the opportunity must now be grasped to unite all those involved to improve pay and conditions, to protect jobs, and to involve the travelling public in the defence of the public transport network as a whole in London against the government's attempts to smash it up and sell it off.

TUC: things not what they were

TUC 1995 report by Roy Thomas

WHEN 30 women delegates marched down to the front of the C Brighton conference hall wearing white T-shirts demanding a £4.15-an-hour minimum wage, you knew things weren't what they were.

They lined up before the platform and faced delegates with their demand in very black type on their chests. They stopped General Secretary John Morris in his tracks in the middle of the General Council report on minimum wage.

The women met with a round of applause from the delegates.

Such a demonstration has not happened before. It was a poke in the nose to the general secretary.

The leaderships of all the unions have bowed down before Blair and Monks's demand that even the measly figure of £4.15 an hour be dropped. Even the miners' NUM and the builders' UCATT had withdrawn their amendments on the minimum wage.

As a printers' GPMU delegate pointed out, £166 for a 40-hour week before tax, national insurance, etc, is not a living wage.

This mood among the big delegations, which contain a large proportion of working members as opposed to full-time officials, was also demonstrated when

Tony Blair spoke. The Labour leader clearly was uncomfortable and nervous as he approached the platform. He met with a polite handclap. But when he finished the traditional standing ovation fell flat. Up to 50 per cent of the delegates gave a vote of no confidence with their bottoms stuck firmly in their seats.

Most general secretaries lurched to their feet, but their delegations often didn't follow their 'lead'.

For example, Transport and General Workers' Union general secretary Bill Morris was seen to be among the standers, but sitting right next to him was union president Dan Duffy — the T&G member on the Labour Party Na-

tional Executive Committee.

Blair's comments on the anti-union laws and his statement that a Labour government would not sweep them away, were, as one would expect, denounced by NUM leader Arthur Scargill.

At a fringe meeting after Blair's performance, Scargill called for resistance to anti-union laws not just their repeal.

While Blair wants to move the Labour Party away from the unions, many trade unionists are moving away from Blair and Co.

Many trade union activists want — and have wanted all their politically-active lives — a socialist party. They are quickly coming to the conclusion that Labour is not it.

Behind T&G MP's resignation

BY MARY IDE

WHEN Labour MP Kevin McNamara resigned from his shadow cabinet job as spokesperson for the civil service, he said: 'I do not believe it is the role of a government to be neutral between the social partners [i.e., trade unions and employers].'

It cannot be if it is to advance the cause of economic justice in our society.

Of course, McNamara is wrong if he suggests that Blair is being 'neutral' between 'social partners'. Blair is planted firmly in the camp of the employers and the bourgeois order. But, McNamara is reflecting that section of

the working-class movement that recognises that it needs its own independent political representation. The break came two days after Blair's speech to the TUC.

For some years, McNamara has been the secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union group of MPs.

McNamara reports to the T&G executive every quarter and minutes of the T&G MP meetings are also submitted to the executive.

It appears from these minutes that T&G-sponsored MPs Tony Blair and Gordon Blair do not attend these meetings.

Even before being elected as Labour leader, Blair did not want to be associated with the T&G. At

the same time, deputy leader Margaret Beckett, and acting party leader after John Smith's death, does attend T&G MPs' meetings.

The other question McNamara broke with Blair on, Ireland, is also not without its significance. It is a break with the 'bi-partisan' approach to the Irish question that has been in place almost without interruption since 1969. Of course, Labour has voted against the Prevention of Terrorism Act, on civil liberties' grounds, since it left government office in 1979.

Ironically, it was a Labour government that introduced the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. These pro-

visions have been so temporary that they have lasted, with some amendments, from November 1974.

T&G executive members close to McNamara now expect him to stand down at the next election. They think that Joan Ruddock, currently chair of the T&G MPs, might have her eyes on his spot. But, they need not fear. As part of Blair's inner group, Ruddock is looking for a transport minister's job after the general election.

The resignation of McNamara — a long-standing front-bench spokesperson with strong links with the trade unions — is a further step in the march of Labour leaders away from any contact with the organised working class.

Vanunu plans hunger strike

ISRAELI Mordechai Vanunu, known for revealing the Zionist regime's secret nuclear arsenal, is planning a hunger strike at the end of this month, to mark the nine years he has spent in solitary confinement.

Vanunu was kidnapped on 30 September 1986, five days before the 'Sunday Times' carried his account of work at the Dimona reactor, indicating that Israel had nuclear weapons.

After a secret trial he was sentenced to 18 years jail for espionage. Last month a local newspaper revealed that the authorities had done nothing to implement a Beersheba district court order easing his conditions.

to be allowed to make telephone calls, to meet members of his family without having a barrier between him and them, and to have a personal computer in his cell. Vanunu has been kept more than 3,000 days in solitary so far, and supporters are worried about his health. Israeli police authorities would not allow two doctors from Britain to visit him recently.

In a message to supporters last week, Vanunu said that since he was kidnapped in Europe, Europe should protect him.

'I will be on a hunger strike for a few days on the nine-year anniversary of the kidnapping. I think you need to do something very strong on this day, like

Labour leaders back out of Clause Four challenge by NUM

LABOUR leader Tony Blair could have taken some advice from his highly-paid QC wife Cherrie Booth or even fallen back on his own legal expertise. But apparently not.

In the face of a challenge from the National Union of Mineworkers, the Labour Party have been forced to put Clause Four back on the agenda at its annual conference in October.

The NUM challenged the legality of the Labour leadership's rush to change Clause Four, arguing that the Labour Party constitution was quite clear that its rules could only be changed at a full annual conference.

Thus the decision to change 'Clause Four' at last April's special conference was void.

Secretary Tom Sawyer says the party backed down to save the £100,000 the case would have cost, it seems clear the more pressing reason is that they would have lost the case.

Then the arrogance and contempt that Blair and his co-conspirators against the labour movement have for the working class and its organisations would have been exposed.

It seems almost certain that the vote will again go for Blair in October, but the mood of support for Blair by many trade union delegations and even some constituency parties is not what it was in April.

The vote then was 65 to 35 per cent for Blair and his new Clause Four. Hopefully, he won't do so

Walkers Crisps says 'no more Mr Nice Guy' to its workers

THE GMB union is asking for help in winning back union recognition rights at Walkers Crisps factory in Peterlee:

Walkers Crisps, formerly Tudor Crisps, at Peterlee, have begun to take their own advertising too seriously. Since the factory was taken over by PepsiCo it has definitely been a case of 'No more Mr Nice Guy'.

The company has introduced new contracts for the employees, increased weekly hours, compulsory overtime, purchase of holidays, and imposed start and finish at the machines rather than clocking in and out at the factory gates.

A common theme running through the whole of PepsiCo group has been to withdraw rec-

ognition of trade unions wherever they can — that is what they are attempting to do at Peterlee.

That is why we are asking for your help to defend trade union rights at Walkers. We have already received messages of support from all over the world. Now we need to show Walkers what their customers think of the way they treat their staff.

You can help us bring Walkers back to the negotiating table by boycotting the products of Walkers/PepsiCo: Walkers Crisps, KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), Pizza Hut and Pepsi Cola.

Thank you for your support. GMB, Britain's General Union, 22-24 Worpole Road, London SW19 4DD. Tel: 0181-947 3131. Fax: 0181-944 6552.

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

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**Inside
left**

**Straw
Ducks**

was one of those scenes that stuck in my mind as a child even though I don't remember the title of the film, nor follow the plot: the police ordered to clear the capital's streets of tramps and ne'er do wells, we come across Harpo leaning nonchalantly on his elbow against a wall. What you do, holding the wall, sneers a cop. Harpo nods with his usual beaming smile. They haul him away, whereupon we see this huge crowd come crashing down into the street. Well, I thought it was hilarious.

still do. The humour in the Marx Brothers' **Duck Soup** is highly cerebral (watch the mirror scene!) and brilliant political commentary (it was banned by Mussolini). If you remember, Freedomia is on its uppers economically, and can only secure a loan if it appoints a man of honour to safeguard its future. Naturally the figure Margaret Dumont in mind is Rufus T. Firefly (Groucho Marx), and the figure he has in mind is hers.

Understand these plans? Why, a 10-year-old child could understand them. Go out and fetch me a six-year-old child, I can't make head or tail of them! Considering videos and personal computers hadn't been invented, you must admit such lines are prophetic.

Having insulted everyone in sight, he recruited Harpo and Chico as intelligence, and wisecracked his way to power (wonder what Milosevic and Gadjizic think of the movie?), Groucho has his ramshackle republic in his hands in no time.

The film was made in 1933, which was a coincidence as the year Hitler came to power. But what brought to mind that scene with Harpo holding the wall up was reading last week about the Blairites' plans for Labour's party leader to have 'sole ultimate responsibility' for strategy; and Jack Layton's grand vision, in lieu of a policy for homes or jobs, of ridding the streets of vagrants and beggars. The edifice that's tumbling down is liberal democracy.

**Jacques a
new master**

Having told *Guardian* readers at the last general election that he felt sympathy for the Liberal Democrats on many issues, former *Marxism Today* editor Martin Jacques announced not long afterwards that most of us had benefited from Tory policies anyway.

For the majority of people, life is only better. There is more opportunity, more choice. The ex-Communist party thinker accused Left-wingers of enjoying the good things in life while resenting the pleasures of others (*Guardian*, 30 May 1992, and comment in this column, 13 June 1992).

So how's life at the *Independent*, where Jacques became deputy editor? An article in *Casablanca* magazine accuses him of 'strutting around in designer threads, giving orders, and some low-calorie Il Duce' ('Below decks at the Independent').

An employee whom he wanted to work on Sundays said she would prefer to stick to her contracted Monday-Friday, as she wanted the weekends with her family.

According to *Casablanca's* malcontent reporter, Jacques pressed on, including 'See you on Sunday'. 'The man was found in tears', it claims. 'The people just don't appreciate the freedom that capitalism offers.'

Charlie Pattinson

Pan-Africanism the British

Next month sees the 50th anniversary of the 5th Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester. The Scottish labour historian JAMES YOUNG looks at the background to this historic gathering, which was a pace-maker of decolonisation in Africa and highlighted the failure of the British 'Left' to break from its rotten imperialist tradition

AN EVENT of major significance in British and international politics, the 5th Pan-African Congress marked the advent of a major anti-imperialist force in the world.

Committed to the struggle to get rid of western — especially British — imperialism, it also gave much attention to racism in Britain and the British Empire.

Writing in the *New Leader*, organ of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), in June 1945, the English socialist writer Frank A. Ridley asserted that 'The Pan-African Federation, an institution of much greater historical significance than the [recently founded] United Nations Organisation, has an invaluable role to play in Africa itself and in Britain'.

The Pan-African movement's standpoint was well known to readers of the *New Leader* through George Padmore's contributions in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as those of C.L.R. James, who played a key role in developing Pan-African ideas in the British labour movement before he left London for New York in 1938.

What distinguished the 1945 Pan-African Congress from its predecessors was its 'plebeian' character and its militant determination to throw the imperialists out of Africa and the whole of the Empire.

But this historic Congress did not develop in a vacuum. It was the outcome of black and white Britons' struggle against the 'colour bar' in British hotels, restaurants, and dance halls, against racism and imperialist barbarity.

From the 1880s until the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the British socialist movement was permeated from top to bottom with racism and English ethnic nationalism.

Opposing the agitation of Jim Connell, author of *The Red Flag*, James Connolly and others inside the nominally Marxist Social Democratic Federation — H.M. Hyndman and Ernest Belfort Bax — refused to publish Connell's pamphlet *Brothers at Last*.

But this pamphlet, subtitled *An Appeal to Celt and Saxon* to intensify the struggle for Irish independence and the break-up of the British Empire, was published by the ILP in Glasgow in 1898.

Imperialist

The English labour movement was always characterised by its sympathetic attachment to such imperialist ideas as 'England for the English' à la Robert Blatchford, and the dismissal of black Britons.

This 'socialist culture' of Brits like Hyndman and James Ramsay MacDonald was not eradicated by either the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin or the Bolshevik revolution.

And despite there being an anti-imperialist tendency in the ILP, the English leftist Norman Leys, nominally anti-imperialist, asserted that 'it is so difficult to explain to people who have never lived in Africa how dreadfully ignorant Africans are

and what a disabling thing barbarism is'.

Inheriting this rotten imperialist tradition, the English Left annoyed Lenin, who clashed with Tom Quelch at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, in 1920.

Quelch told Lenin that rank-and-file English workers would count it treachery to help enslaved peoples in their revolts against British rule.

Agitation

Black socialists who championed anti-imperialist agitation in England and the Empire were regarded, in C.L.R. James's phrase, as 'the white socialist's burden'.

As a result of the dominant pro-imperialist attitudes in the English labour movement, and under the impact of the anti-imperialist Bolshevik revolution, advocates of Pan-African ideas, including the pro-Irish and pro-Pan-African Londoner R.M. Fox, increasingly challenged the white English left from an internationalist standpoint.

Despite Fox's important anti-imperialist articles, and those of the Jamaican writer Claude McKay, in Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought*, it was not until the early 1930s that a militant Pan-African movement of black Britons developed substantial support for the break-up of the British Empire.

Two seminal books — George Padmore's *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* (1931) and C.L.R. James's *A Short History of Negro Revolt* (1938) — defended the continuing black revolts inside the British Empire against British socialism's dominant paternalistic tradition ('Just wait until we get Parliamentary power and then we shall "grant" you freedom').

'Even in the ranks of revolutionary workers numerous examples of white chauvinism can be recorded', declared Padmore.

When he was expelled from the Comintern in 1934 for 'black nationalism', the Stalinists' Popular Front policy obliged them to distinguish between 'progressive', 'democratic' French and British imperialism and 'reactionary' Japanese imperialism.

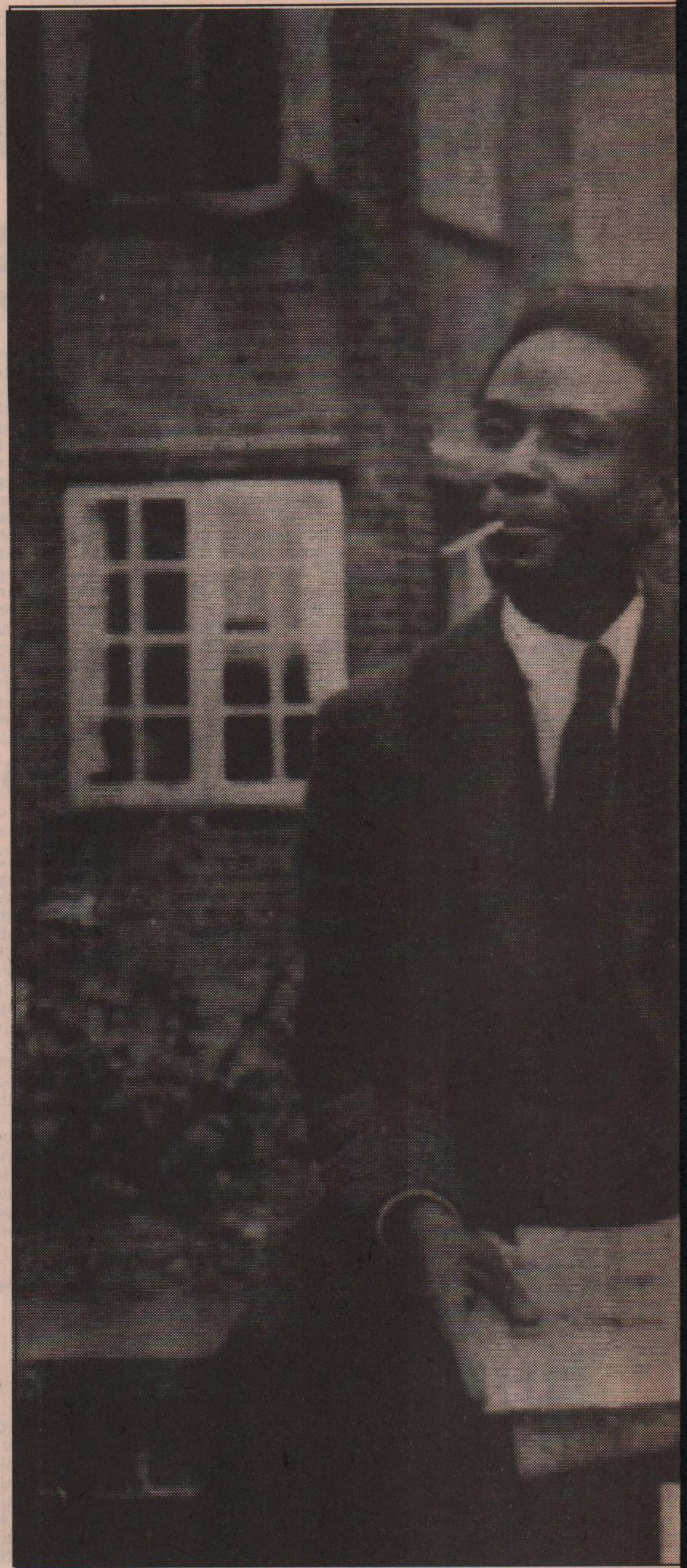
In Britain a significant, though small, number of black British workers, intellectuals, and writers fought for the ideas of Pan-African socialist internationalism.

The Italian fascists invaded Ethiopia in 1935, and the Stalinists betrayed the anti-imperialist struggle. At that moment Harry O'Connell, Chris Jones, Arnold Ward, Ras Makonnen, Dr Harold Moody (founder of the increasingly militant League of Coloured Peoples), and other black Britons formed the Coloured Colonial Seamen's Union to fight the active racism of the National Union of Seamen.

The late 1930s and early 1940s saw a significant growth of Pan-African organisation by black workers and intellectuals inside and outside of organised Labour.

Nevertheless, in an important and neglected article in the US *Socialist Appeal* (August 1939), C.L.R. James argued that 'the English revolutionary movement is eaten to the marrow with a most dangerous anti-Negro chauvinism'.

Analysing the factors strengthening Pan-African socialist ideas and



George Padmore in 1937 at an Independent Labour Party Summer

agitations, he said that 'English bourgeois and petty-bourgeois society was the most race-conscious in Western Europe before the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933'.

By 1945, the Pan-Africanist movement in England was unlike any of its predecessors. Besides being more militant it was also more nationalist in orientation.

As Peter O. Esdebe said: 'The moderates' criticisms of the colonial

regimes, hitherto tempered with polite phrases, henceforth assumed a tone of marked harshness. . . . The new militancy culminated in the 1945 Manchester Pan-African meeting — the adoption of the strategy of "positive action" and the enlisting of mass support in Africa and the West Indies.'

Insisting that the European Left had forfeited the right to lead the anti-imperialist struggle, the South

ism and n 'Left'



School

African writer Peter Abrahams justified the decision of the Manchester Congress to 'go it alone'.

He added realistically: 'There are dangers in it. . . Dangers of a black-white struggle without a socialist basis. . . But then "white chauvinism" has had a long day. However, two evils do not add up to anything but evil. Labour's first post-war statement has added materially to those dangers.'

It has been a major aspect of the tragedy of the 20th century that the struggle for decolonisation by the people of Africa began without a socialist basis.

If the predominantly white Left had taken Lenin's advice to support the colonial workers' struggles, today's internationalist Left would have been much stronger than it is — and the tragedy of Bosnia would not have occurred.

Dispute in Tuzla

Bureaucracy shoves industry on street

BY MIRZA MUKIC
Independent journalist
Bosna Est

A CHEMICAL producer in the Tuzla region, Sodaso Holding, is demanding compensation from the Tuzla-Drina canton which in a military fashion commandeered the company's offices a year ago.

The canton authority is dominated by the Muslim-nationalist SDA party and partly by the Croat-nationalist HDZ.

Before the aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sodaso employed about 6,000 people, had a gross annual product of \$400 million. It exported goods worth \$50 million to the West. The war has completely shut off chemical production.

The Tuzla-Drina canton authority employs a massive administration of more than 750 officials which moved into all ten floors of the Sodaso Holding building, throwing on to the street Sodaso's managers, experts and other employees.

Great damage has been suffered by the Tuzla economy. But, the cantonal authority, which is non-productive, spends a lot of money on its functioning.

Sodaso has asked for compensation and the finance minister has signed a contract for the building, but nothing has been received so far. The cantonal debt so far exceeds 100,000 Deutschmarks, which, it seems, will not be paid.

Therefore Sodaso turned to the local court. It remains to be seen what will happen there, but it seems unlikely that a decision will be made in favour of Sodaso.

Politics has penetrated the army, police and judiciary. The presidents of the municipal, district and military courts are SDA members, which gives cause to suspect their impartiality, especially when the defendant is a canton controlled by their party.

Just peace and equal rights

'HOW peace?' was the slogan of a con-

ference of social democrats from Yugoslavia and some European countries held in Tuzla on 4-6 September. Unfortunately it was not attended by as many people as hoped because of a number of difficulties and a number of those invited were unable to come.

The conference, organised by the Union of Bosnian Social Democrats, adopted a resolution on the activities of social democrats in restoring lasting and just peace in the Balkans.

The resolution calls for equal rights for all peoples — to Serbs, Croats, to Bosniaks in Serbia, and Croats in Vojvodina.

Bosnia-Herzegovina must not be divided, it says, and one of the steps towards mutual understanding and recognition of all states formed after the break-up of Yugoslavia by each other.

The resolution finally calls for war criminals to be brought to the International Tribunal in the Hague as a prerequisite for a future life of peace and for the return of all refugees to their homes.

Translated by Faruk Ibrahimovic

The odd ex-'anarchist'

BY DAVID DORFMAN

ANNA BRAMWELL's book *The Fading of the Greens: The Decline of Environmental Politics in the West* received good reviews in *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* last year. She works for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, as co-ordinator of its Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe.

A *Guardian* feature by Patrick Wright mentioned her 'radical feminist' grandmother, and her mother's 'Russian Jewish background', and told us that in 1972 she 'embarked on a Kropotkinite period' (*Guardian*, 15 October 1994).

Which seems rather odd, because Kropotkin, the 'Anarchist Prince' was among other things, a friend to asylum-seekers and immigrant workers, and spoke out against racial persecution.

Whereas Anna Bramwell, whatever her mother's background, was a leading member of the right-wing Monday Club in 1972, and took part in its 'Halt Immigration Now' campaign, calling for mass 'repatriation'.

In the latest issue of *Lobster* magazine Nick Toczek takes exception to the way Bramwell's supposed anarchist background could be used to lend credence to her attacks on alleged left-wing influence in the green movement ('Look what's eating the greens', Nick Toczek, *Lobster*, No.29). Her real political credentials are quite different.

Married to property developer and Monday Club member Roy Bramwell, she was with him in the Powellite Association, which brought members of the Conservative Party and the National Front together behind support for Enoch Powell's views on immigration.

In 1972, she went on the executive of the Society for Individual Freedom, chaired by former MI6 deputy director George Kennedy Young, whose anti-Semitic prejudices were no secret.

Oddly enough, the newspapers promoting Anna Bramwell's academic and 'Green' credentials have not drawn attention to her work *Blood and Soil: Walter Darre and Hitler's 'Green' Party*. Darre was Hitler's Minister of Agriculture from 1933-42. The book must have impressed some people, because its

author was invited to address an ecology conference in 1986 organised by two of the National Front's intellectuals, Richard Lawson and Michael Walker.

The same year, Anna Bramwell was briefly appointed director of studies at the Centre for Policy Studies, co-founded by Margaret Thatcher.

According to right-wing Libertarian Alliance organiser Chris Tame, whom Toczek quotes, it was Professor Max Beloff, principal of the business-funded University of Buckingham, who recommended Bramwell, a former student there. The job did not last, Tame suggests, because of her far-right links.

Perhaps Anna Bramwell's views have changed, in which case we might expect a repudiation of the right-wing, racist company she kept in the past, rather than an attack on the left. With the critical situation in central and eastern Europe, and the part played by institutions like the OECD, we are entitled to know what sort of people hold positions of influence.

■ *Lobster* No.29 is available for £2.50 from Stephen Dorril, 135 School Street, Netherlong, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire HD7 2YB.

Construction Safety Campaign

MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER: Luton Crown Court. Prosecution by Mid Beds District Council Environmental Health Department of Biggleswade employer Kevin Courtney of Saxon Gate Motorist Centre. This prosecution follows the death of employee Timothy Pegg (23) after a tyre exploded. The case is on the 'warned' list. Courtney is reported to be pleading not guilty. *This is not a construction accident.*

MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER: Tonbridge & Malling Magistrates' Court, Palace Avenue, Maidstone, Kent. Tel: 01622 671041. Health and Safety Executive prosecution of East Park Construction of Eastbourne and Tar-

mac Construction Ltd. of Wolverhampton following a trench collapse in West Malling on 31 October 1994. Two Eastbourne men were injured, one of whom, Michael Green, later died in hospital. The trial date could have been changed as a result of a pre-trial hearing.

MONDAY 2 OCTOBER: Hamersmith Coroner's Court, 25 Bagleys Lane, London SW6. Tel: 0171-371 9935. Inquest into death of Gerald Francis (39) of Shepherds Bush who died after a fall from a scaffold at Palace Green, London W8 on 13 February.

TUESDAY 10 OCTOBER: St Pancras Coroner's Court, Camley Street, London NW1. Tel: 0171-387 4884. Coroner's inquest into the death of Edmund Carter (50) who died on 13 May after a fall from a scaffold while working for Floyd Bond Ltd. at a site on Romney House, Hampstead, London NW3.

TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER: Leicester

Magistrates' Court, Pocklington Walk, Leicester. Tel: 0116-255 3666. HSE prosecution for alleged breaches of health and safety legislation and the employment of children by Balaika Ltd. of Leicester — trading as Honeytop Foods, Uxbridge, Middlesex — and William Eid of Westhath Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3, a director of the company. The HSE is to produce evidence alleging that children were employed in a dangerous factory with dangerous machinery and dangerous electrical supplies. This hearing should be committal of the case to the high court. *This is not a construction case.*

TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY 17-18 OCTOBER: Walthamstow Coroner's Court, Queens Road, London E17. Tel: 0181-520 7245. Inquest into the death of Albert Fuller who was crushed between a vehicle and a wall at a recycling plant in Cannock Town. *This is not a construction case.*

Ignorance and Indecency

PAPER, as Trotsky used to say, will bear without protest anything that anyone cares to write on it.

So I wasn't vastly surprised, on opening my *Guardian* entertainment guide on Saturday, 9 September, to find, in a preview of BBC 1's 'The People's Century', the following gem of historical ignorance: 'a Russian man of 106 recounts how he manned the barricades during a 1905 Marxist uprising'.

This note was signed 'GS', initials which, unlike those of the *Guardian's* eight other television previewers, were nowhere filled out into a name.

Finding the semi-anonymous GS' blithely labelling the great, though unsuccessful, Russian revolution of 1905 as 'a... Marxist uprising' did have one happy side-effect: it forced me to watch the first episode of 'The People's Century', and I'm glad I did, if only for the sake of that arresting footage of such events as Louis Blériot's first flight across the Channel in 1909.

It turned out that 'GS' had misheard, or misunderstood, the programme's reference to the existence of underground Marxist organisations in Russia, which it did not hold responsible for the events of 1905.

In fact, these organisations were completely taken by surprise in the October of that year when the Petersburg workers erupted in a political general strike, and soviets, or councils of workers' representatives, started springing up, at first in the print industry.

The Petersburg Bolsheviks looked on these new-fangled councils with a certain suspicion, seeing them as a rival to the party. Lenin wrote advising his comrades to be more co-operative, but the Bolshevik journal *Novaya Zhizn* ('New Life') suppressed his letter, which was not published until 1940.

Some 'Marxist uprising', that was!

To be sure, the Moscow rising of December 1905 was led by Bolsheviks. But that was only one strand in an enormously wider pattern.

The trouble with 'GS' and the young ignoramus who share his uninformed simplistic approach to history is that they view revolution as essentially a kind of conspiracy.

But, as Trotsky told his judges when he was put on trial in September 1906: 'A rising of the masses is not made, gentlemen judges. It makes itself of its own accord. It is the result of social relations and conditions and not of a scheme drawn up on paper. A popular insurrection cannot be staged.'

ANOTHER paper, another writer. And again the paper accepts without protest the garbage vomited on it.

One David Morton has a letter in the *Times Literary Supplement* (15 September) referring to 'the "death of God" phenomena of the nineteenth century'. He writes:

'The ideologies, or quasi-religions, which filled these gaps all used Christian parallels: Holy books, infallible prophets, a Trinity, confession, penance, absolution and excommunication.'

'Thus Freud has id, ego, super-ego; Marx (from Hegel) thesis, antithesis, synthesis; Hitler "ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer". (In the case of the two latter ideologies, excommunication tended to be somewhat terminal.)'

Marx and Freud were Jews. Hitler was directly responsible for the murder of millions of Jews under the most horrifying circumstances, as this year's 50th anniversary of the liberation of the death camps has most painfully and vividly reminded us.

That Hitler's 'excommunication' tended to be somewhat terminal is indeed a well-known fact. But how many people did Marx send to the gas chambers?

Fierce though Marx could be

PERSONAL COLUMN

in debate, even his deadliest barbs were purely literary or verbal; nor can he be held in the slightest degree responsible for murders committed by those who, many years after his death, ruled the Soviet Union under the stolen flag of 'Marxism'.

Though one may have certain doubts about the former's current standing as a scientist, both Freud and Marx considered themselves to be scientific investigators; both believed in applying reason and the scientific method to human problems; both were men of exceptional learning.

It is grotesque — indeed it is abominable — to speak of Hitler in the same breath. Hitler had no learning whatever, and twice failed his school-leaving examinations; he loathed intellectuals and the life of the mind; he had nothing but contempt for the masses of the people; he turned his back on reason, openly proclaiming the need to 'think' with the 'blood'.

Morton's reference to the 'Trinity' of 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis' makes one doubt whether he has ever read a word of Marx, or of Hegel for that matter.

Nothing — I stress, *absolutely nothing* — in Marx depends on, or involves, this 'Trinity'. Where, in his major work *Capital*, he does use the terminology of Hegel (whose dialectical method, he said, had to be turned 'right side up') he does so at the very end of a long and detailed analysis.

The analysis does not flow from, but is rather crowned with, a passing reference to the dialectical law of the negation of negation.

Anyone who compares Marx and Freud, on the one hand, to Hitler, on the other, is displaying either ignorance that defies belief or malice of preternatural dimensions.

Whichever of these afflicts Mr Morton, his letter is indecent, and the *TLS* should be ashamed of having published it.

Lawrence Daly and the SLL

THANKS to a friend in Scotland, who has sent me a photocopy of the relevant section of Willie Thompson's 1978 essay on 'The New Left in Scotland', I can now partly answer Dave Chapple (see 'Clarion call' in this column last week).

Dave had written, in the June-July issue of *Somerset Clarion*: 'According to Willie Thompson, [Lawrence] Daly was formally approached later that year [i.e. 1959] by Peter Fryer from the Socialist Labour League, but the [F]ife [S]ocialist [L]eague decided not to affiliate.'

But Thompson does not say that the approach was made by me. What he does say, in *Essays in Scottish Labour History: a tribute to W.H. Marwick*, edited by Ian MacDougall (Edinburgh, Donald, [1978]), p.210, is the following:

'The F.S.L. was ... approached at this point by the newly-created Socialist Labour League, whose journal, the *Newsletter*, Peter Fryer edited at that time, but rejected a formal compact.'

Dave asks, in his *Somerset Clarion* article: 'Was it the SLL's open Trotskyism that put Daly off, or was it the SLL's entryist attitude to the British Labour Party?'

From what I know of Daly, and from what I remember of the SLL, I would guess that it was both. But this is only a guess. The person to answer Dave's question is surely Willie Thompson, whose above-quoted sentence is presumably based on some document or documents in Daly's archives.

Peter Fryer

Bosnia solidarity in France by János Boróvi

Tuzla union convoy

TWO 38-ton lorries from France went to Tuzla on July's trade union convoy, organised by the trade union committee of that north-east Bosnian town.

One was organised on the initiative of Secours Ouvrier pour la Bosnie (Workers Aid for Bosnia) with several trade unions: The SUD-PTT (postal workers), CGT-ONIC (wheat office), CFDT-Val, o Lyon (factory), SDEN-CGT Nord/Pas de Calais (teachers' union), UNEF-ID (student union), 'L'Ecole Emancipée'.

It delivered baby food, computers, wheat, rice and other essential goods. Several solidarity groups helped the trade union lorry, including: 'Etudiants pour Sarajevo', 'Association Lorraine pour le Paix et la Solidarité, en ex-Yougoslavie', 'Mères pour la Paix'-Lille.

The other lorry, organised by the 'Collective parisien contre la purification ethnique', joined with, among other things, medical aid aimed at the hospital in Zenica.

There will be a public meeting of Secours Ouvrier pour la Bosnie at the end of September, when union delegates on the convoy will report on their experiences and discuss perspectives. There will be an SOB pamphlet on Tuzla, its people and unions and our rich experiences, produced for that meeting.

There was an enthusiastic response to the convoy with each union delegate becoming a propagandist for the defence of multi-cultural Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The links made on the convoy between British and French postal workers of the Communication Workers' Union and the SUD-PTT is particularly important along with the common call

they have made for aid for Bosnia. It opens new horizons for international solidarity in other fields.

The latest events

When Ariane Mouchkine and her six comrades came to the end of their 27-day hunger strike for Bosnia, 1,700 supporters went to greet them on Sunday 3 September at the 'Cartoucherie' Theatre in Paris.

This well-known theatre director and the other artists started their action to support pluralistic Bosnian integrity against carve-up plans. The action followed a call issued at the Avignon theatre festival.

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic went to see them during a visit to Paris in August and asked them to stop their hunger strike given the new situation created by the NATO military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Several currents of the Bosnia solidarity movement participated in the meeting along with people expressing their views by phone.

The majority at the Paris meeting and those who spoke from the Sarajevo opposition organised around Circle 99 expressed support for French President Jacques Chirac and applauded his 'determination'; and saw the air strikes on Chetnik positions as a 'first positive step' towards peace.

A Circle 99 member from Sarajevo presented three options for Bosnia-Herzegovina's future:

■ First, the unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina divided into two

entities — a Bosnian-Croat part and a Serb republic. A legal 'unity' with division, in fact.

The Circle 99 speaker commented that Izetbegovic's idea is that the Bosnian-Croatian part of Bosnia-Herzegovina will in the future by its democratic life prove its superiority to the Serb 'republic', whose inhabitants would recognise the fact and peacefully reintegrate at a later date.

■ Second, peace at any price to give time to act like Croatia and build a strong army and then crush the fascists.

■ Third, the Circle 99 position: real unity of Bosnia, no concessions to the fascists. The speaker did not see how to implement this option.

Bosnian speakers who supported the NATO air strike and Chirac at the same time underlined that the problem was not whether the fascists should get 30 or 20 per cent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina but that they should get any! They strongly stressed that the refugees' right of return was the key test of any just peace agreement.

But very few understood, as some Bosnian refugees working with SOB do, that the aims of the big powers have not changed. That the aim of the NATO air strike is not to defend the unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina against ethnic cleansing, as claimed by Chirac, but to implement the carve-up.

The great powers want to realise and rejuvenate the old Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg plans, the plans of the 'Contact Group', plans which all failed thanks to the heroic resistance of the Bosnian people.

Since the Cartoucherie meet-

ing news has come about the deal signed between the foreign ministers of Sarajevo, Belgrade and Zagreb. This is a setback for the fight for the integrity and existence of a multi-cultural and democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This deal recognises the gangster 'Srpska Republic' regime of Radovan Karadzic in Pale. It evades the issue of return in favour of a hypothetical return or an 'equitable indemnity'!

The only 'concession' Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic made was to 'recognise' *divided* Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The imperialists have succeeded in ramming through this draft agreement but it is far from being implemented.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Banja Luka, Srebrenica; the heroic people of Sarajevo, Tuzla; the more and more powerful Bosnian army: these do not see the peace as a peace with the murderers.

The demand to lift the arm embargo remains more real than ever. But the pressure of imperialism should not be underestimated. The great powers have a plan. They see the 'peace process' in Bosnia-Herzegovina as being like that in Palestine.

The 'Pax Americana' pushed by imperialism on Bosnia looks very much like that concluded by Arafat with the Zionist occupying power against the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

But the fight is far from finished. The solidarity movement with multi-cultural, democratic Bosnia wins more and more sympathy.

The two tasks of developing international solidarity around Bosnia-Herzegovina and clarifying independent working-class perspectives go together.

A landlubber's guide to 'surfing' by George Angus

Some complaints from the depths of cyberspace

YOU may have come across expressions in the media such as 'Yo dudes! Hang ten! Let's surf the web, neheads!' and paused to wonder their meaning.

In fact, this contemptible guff emanated from the computer industry, and it's a relatively simple matter to work out what they're going on about.

'Hang ten!', for example, does not refer to revolutionary justice and the sales staff of a certain computer shop in Tottenham Court Road.

It's a surfing term that means when you're on your surfboard and you get into a spot of difficulty you skilfully grip the edge with your toes. It's considered 'cooler' if both feet point in the same direction.

'Surf' refers not to aquatic surfing but the kind that can be done in the comfort of your own home.

Say you want to indulge in a bit of channel surfing. You will need a long couch, a ham and pineapple pizza (optional), a TV and a remote control.

First, lie on the couch with the pizza on your chest. Make sure your feet are protruding off the end of the couch and you are thus 'hanging ten'. Grasp the remote control with one hand and a slice of pizza with the other.

Now the tricky bit. You should then endeavour to eat the pizza while simultaneously changing the channels every eight seconds. The eight seconds are crucial, otherwise there is the danger that you may inadvertently be able to follow what is happening on the flickering screen. To channel-surf interactively

means you must grunt either in agreement or disagreement (it doesn't matter which) at the TV, at random, every now and again. It should take two or three minutes to master this technique and after a short time you will have attained the sought-after glazed eyes and slack jaw of accomplished surfers, of any sort, the world over.

There is a certain amount of patter cross-over between the world of surfing and the world of computing. There are three main schools of thought: one is that since both these activities are centred on Southern California it's bound to happen; another, that both are at the leading edge of 'youth culture'; and, my favourite, who gives a monkey's f---?

The 'web' is very much like the 'internet'. They both refer to a series of computers joined-up down the telephone. It's really very boring. A 'nehead' is obviously anyone who bears a disconcerting resemblance to Ina Sharples.

The one outstanding aspect of the web or internet is the unprecedented levels of bullshit about it issuing from the media.

Downloading

I'm sick of these yuppy bums downloading upon my newspaper. It seems we are constantly haragued by bespectacled beardedies prattling on about what a great thing it is.

Buzz words include 'information superhighway', 'virtual reality' and, most outrageously, 'empowerment'. It is worth looking at what they actually mean.

For example, the 'information superhighway' appears to be festooned with virtual traffic cones at present; a more accurate phrase would be 'the electronic B9088 to Funzie Bay, Shetland'.

'Virtual reality' is simple enough. The most popular 'site' on the internet is where the 'Bay-watch Babes' appear. You can see pictures of pneumatic young ladies on screen. The pictures are entirely artificial, but then so are the women! The whole process has nothing to do with the real world at all — hence 'virtual reality'.

'Empowerment' is the phrase that really gets my electronic goat. It means utopia will arrive when we all surf that tidal wave of cultural debris that is the internet. Does having electronic access to 'A Tree Planter's Guide to Scourie' or the night-bus timetable for Tierra Del Fuego mean I'm a free human being?

Besides, to be 'empowered', means you have to be able to afford electricity, a phone, a computer, a modem and an education. How about empowering people in the real world?

It costs around £1,000 for the necessary electric surfing gear. At a certain computer shop in Tottenham Court Road I was charged £70 for a three-foot length of cable and a transformer. I felt so 'empowered' I couldn't afford to get a pint to celebrate!

There are a number of scams being perpetrated on net users.

First, the astronomical phone bills. You buy a phone and a modem, you rent a phone line and you then pay to use them. And the electricity — you could run a pig-

iron smelt in your bathroom for the same cost.

Then there are the machines. Thousands of middle-class men have been conned into buying over-powerful computers for which they have no need. Household accounts? You could govern Guatemala on one of these babies and still have enough 'cyberspace' for a game of 'Donkey Kong' and your wee list of *really important things to do*.

Disturbing

Bill Gates's *Windows '95* has its own embryonic net system. The disturbing thing about it is if you log on it automatically reads your hard disk unless you order it not to (and how can you be sure even then?). You hear of hackers breaking into commercial and government systems; what do you think GCHQ is doing whenever you connect your own machine to a modem?

The development of computer, communication and satellite technologies are a direct result of public investment, principally by the Pentagon, where there were developed the computer languages Fortran (FORmula TRANslation, great for aiming missiles), Cobol (Computer Orientated Business Language, well-handly for research into large number theory and its application: counting all the dosh the government is throwing at you) and others.

These were the largest public works since the Great Wall of China. It is ironic that you have to pay so much to use one to see the other.

Bosnia in art by Rex Dunn

Terror, pity and rage!

UPON seeing Farad Ibrahimovic's recent exhibition of paintings, I was reminded of the World War I poetry of Wilfred Owen: 'My subject is war, and the pity of war/The poetry is in the pity.'

Like Farad, Owen also objectified psychic and hallucinatory experiences, for example in his last poem, 'Strange Meeting'. But here the comparison ends. For Farad, we must add the emotions of raw terror, anger, which in most instances are uppermost.

This is entirely justified. Farad is not just a youthful artist, an angry young man. He is also a Bosnian refugee. He wants to hit back at Serb-nationalist aggression and all the fascist atrocities visited on his country, which takes place with the connivance of the imperialist powers.

The fact that he is willing to explore the innermost depth of his feelings, even if they are violent and negative for most of the time, is a welcome relief from the cold, cerebral nature of most of today's art and its obsession with kitch.

Farad manages to be both critical and passionate, expressionistic — bordering on the abstract — at the same time.

In the course of his strongly personal reflections on the war in Bosnia, he also pays homage to high modernism — the work of Munch, Picasso, Bacon and Pollock. His starting point is the art work as aesthetic object in its own right. But what we also see here is the 'rights of passage' of 'the artist as young man'. He clearly has a long way to go before he finds his own creative niche.

Farad appears to be in a great rush to experiment with existing artistic forms. The work on show reveals a variety of techniques and materials: brush and oils, scratch marks, collages which incorporate newsprint, gloves or sacking.

Doors

He paints on everyday disposable objects, such as reinforced cardboard, even old doors (for a series entitled *Exit*; but precisely what is leaving? Is he referring to the artistic form or the Picasso-like figures themselves?) His

most inspirational piece is his installation (of which more later).

Broken down into their constituent parts, Farad's themes are, unsurprisingly: rape, genocide, fascism, Munch's scream; also sexual imagery, both male and female.

Death

Perhaps in the midst of all this death and destruction, he wants to affirm life. (Comparisons can be made with the more literal, but equally expressionistic Egon Schiele, a World War I contemporary of Owen.)

Clearly Farad's ambiguous and emotional response to the break-up of 'Communist' Yugoslavia is a dominant influence. But this is often triggered off by other events, such as the death of the writer Bukowski, which also affected him. For Farad, 'Buk' is a kindred spirit; since the latter could only affirm his own humanity by deferring to the 'dirtiness' of life. At the moment there is a bit of the Bohemian nihilist in Farad's work.

If I have any criticism of him, it is certainly not his whirlwind exploration of artistic forms and techniques. Clearly he needs to continue to experiment until he settles on a form which he finds both productive and the means to achieve greater subtlety and depth.

At the moment, his most successful work is spontaneous, untrained for effect, simple and quick in its execution, as seen in the flowing brush strokes and deeper colours which characterise some of his female figures, as eponymous victims of rape. I don't think his more elaborate and larger piece in the same room as these is nearly as good. It is over-elaborated.

I was also disappointed not to find any light relief; works that are sensually playful. But in this respect, there is one which stands out like a beacon — a painting of New York's skyline at night. Most of the picture's surface consists of rich black paint and a lighter sky; flecks of red illuminate the buildings; a sharp implement has been used to scratch in further detail.

At first glance it looks like a Paul Klee. Of course, it would be

entirely unjustified to expect a Bosnian artist to produce works of art that are the equivalent of a warm bath!

As Farad says, art is both positive and negative.

The show's *pièce de résistance* is an installation called *History Lesson* (Farad likes to anchor his work with titles). He told me that when he arrived at the gallery, he found a cellar downstairs. He decided to use it for his exhibition: 'It reminded me of a cave used by Bosnian soldiers.'

Inside the cellar we find the body of a dead man, gaping shrapnel wound in his head. He has no weapon or uniform. The only sign of his identity is a pair of authentic Bosnian army boots on his feet. Stale bread litters the bare floor. There is a crude chalk drawing of a woman and child on the wall (a symbol of normality).

We also find six candles burning. For the more astute person, these symbolise the six republics of the former Communist Party-run Federation of Yugoslavia.

On the back wall is a facsimile of the old Yugoslav flag (if only he could have used the real thing). It is covered in graffiti. 'Art is love' (as well!) is one statement on the flag.

A grotesque phallus appears to be pissing on the flag (the Chetnik and Ustache aggressors? The rabid dogs unleashed by Milosevic and Tudjman).

Graffiti

But the Yugoslav flag merges with the flags of the UN at the bottom. One's eye moves from the dead man in the foreground to the flags of Britain, France, the US, Germany, Greece, Ukraine, etc., up to the graffiti on the Yugoslav flag, and back down again.

For once we have an installation which is not only concrete in form, but in meaning.

We have come to the end of this exhibition. But it also promises a new beginning.

It is a pity that this exhibition was in such a cramped space (the **Alternative Art Gallery**, near Baker Street in London).

It is to be hoped that when Farad is ready for his next show he has more space and a longer time for the exhibition to run.



History Lesson by Farad Ibrahimovic

Iran

Iranian socialists unite

THE present political situation in Iran has become very explosive. The political and economic crisis has deepened rapidly during the last few years. In other words the 'rulers' can no longer rule the masses and the 'ruled' are revolting against them.

For example, on 4 April, the occupants of Islam Shah, south of Tehran, mainly young workers, revolted against the regime and took control of their town of 500,000 people.

Again, towards the end of July, 4,000 Benz Khavar workers, a lorry assembly plant, went on strike for higher wages. Ghaem Shahr textile workers also went on strike recently for more pay.

These followed demonstrations by Iranian oil workers and mass upsurges in several towns during the last two years.

In June, several socialist groups, after months of discussions, formed the Iranian Revolutionary Socialists League.

Although not yet a vanguard party, it aims at becoming one through its intervention within the vanguard workers of Iran, and distinguishing itself clearly from all shades of Stalinist, reformist

and centrist organisations within the Iranian left opposition.

The IRSL will be publishing a regular monthly paper, *Kargar-e Socialist* (*Socialist Worker*), and a bi-annual theoretical journal, *Didgah-e Socialism Enghelabi* (*Revolutionary Socialism Review*). It will also participate in two Iranian united front organisations, the Iranian Left Workers' Unity and the Iranian Refugees and Workers Association.

The present supporters of the IRSL came from the following political traditions and backgrounds:

- The Iranian Revolutionary Socialists (supporters of *Workers' Socialist Notebooks*).
- The Organisation of Iranian Peoples' Fedaii Guerillas (Minority).
- The Iranian Workers Red Star Cell (Tehran).
- The Socialist Workers Party (Kurdistan).
- The Workers Internationalist Group (Kurdistan).
- Some independent revolutionary socialists.

The IRSL aims to build an international organisation based

on the experiences of the first four congresses of the Communist International.

September 1995
Iranian Revolutionary Socialists League
 PO Box 14, Potters Bar, Herts., EN6 1LE, Britain.

General aims and tasks of the IRSL

1. To struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling capitalist regime in Iran through a general political strike and an armed insurrection.
2. To strive for the creation of city and village soviets and the realisation of the demand for workers' and peasants' control over production and distribution, and the extension of socialist cells and clandestine action committees in the main economic units, factories and villages.
3. To defend the right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination, including secession and formation of independent states. To struggle for

the abolition of any discrimination based on beliefs, sex, race, or political affiliation. To defend the formation of a democratic constituent assembly based on the organs of self-organisation of the people and to struggle for workers' democracy within mass organisations.

4. To struggle for the formation of a republic of workers' and poor peasants' soviets as the only regime capable of solving the problems of the revolution.
5. To strive towards the formation of a revolutionary international for the overthrow of capitalism, world imperialism and the formation of a socialist society.
6. To defend revolutionary struggles of the working class internationally, against imperialism and capitalist states.

Appeal

To the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, all democratic parties, organisations, individuals and publications

The sit-in by 160 Iranian political refugees in Turkey, at the central office of the United Socialist Party, objecting to the denial of recognition of their political-refugee status by the UN, after more than a month, has reached a critical stage.

Turkish police have consistently exerted pressure to break up the sit-in and the Turkish Foreign Office has asked the refugees to leave.

The United Socialist Party has been put under pressure by the Turkish government threatening to ban its organisation. Four of the USP's office workers have been arrested. Also due to poor sanitation and living conditions, the health of the refugees — including 65 children and 30 women — is in danger.

The number of sick people is increasing every day and innocent children are the victims of these unbearable conditions.

Once again we ask the UN in Turkey to reassess its decisions regarding these refugees. Returning them to the inferno of the Islamic Republic is as good as condemning them to execution. In that case, the responsibility for

their death would not only be that of the Iranian regime, but of the UN and its Geneva HQ. This is not the first time Iranian refugees have become the victims of the security pact between the Turkish government and the Islamic Republic. The refugees have become prey in Turkey's 'hunting ground'.

We draw the attention of all those countries which host refugees — in particular Australia, Sweden, other European countries and the US — to the existing conditions of these political refugees in Turkey and point out the necessity of granting them political refugee status.

We also ask all forces who are defenders of human rights to condemn the security pact between the Islamic Republic and Turkey and to put pressure upon these countries to break this pact.

We also ask all organisations, parties and institutions to defend the 160 refugees, materially and morally, in any way they can, to stop them being returned to the inferno of the Islamic Republic.

Iranian Left Workers' Unity Co-ordinating Committee
 11 September

Don't let Bosnia's military gains be lost politically

BOSNIAN forces, with their Croat military allies, have made dramatic gains in the past fortnight, throwing the Serb nationalists out of Donje Vakuf, in central Bosnia, and several towns in the west, and taking back thousands of square miles of territory.

The historic town of Jajce, seat of Bosnian kings in the Middle Ages, and of the first partisan government set up in World War II, fell without a shot to Croat forces on 13 September.

Jajce's electricity plants supply power and light to much of Serb-held Bosnia, including Banja Luka, which was itself threatened by the rapid advance.

By 18 September, some 20 per cent of the country had changed hands. The Bosnian Army's Fifth Corps from Bihac had opened the main road to central Bosnia, and taken Sanski Most to the east, pointing towards Banja Luka. Bosnian forces around Mount Ozren eliminated a Serb Chetnik pocket between Tuzla and Maglaj.

Despite superior weaponry to start, Serb-nationalist forces, a mixture of fascist lumpen, peasants and unwilling conscripts, were falling back in disarray. Their commander, General Ratko Mladic, was ahead of his men — in Belgrade for medical treatment.

Whatever the extent of NATO bombing (accounts vary), this was not its intention. British officials and BBC hacks voiced fears for the 'peace process'.

US officials admitted it might be difficult to confine Bosnians to the 51 per cent of their country allocated to be a 'Muslim-Croat federation'.

Declared

Lt General Rupert Smith, the ex-SAS man commanding UN troops, declared the Bosnian government the main obstacle to a peace settlement.

Tens of thousands of fleeing Serbs brought chaos to Dobo and Banja Luka. Moved on by the Serb authorities, they began heading further east.

There were fears that some

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

Bosnian soldiers, past victims of Serb-Chetnik 'ethnic cleansing' and concentration camps in central Bosnia, might be exacting revenge and not taking prisoners.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina government decided to pause, with forces less than 35 miles from Banja Luka. More than 450,000 non-Serbs were driven out of the Banja Luka area by the Chetniks, leaving only 35,000.

Besides the threat of reprisals to them, the risk was that an all-out assault might bring a humanitarian disaster to Banja Luka's 200,000 population and masses of Serb refugees.

Initiative

'We are not seeking the surrender of Banja Luka,' Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey said on 18 September. 'We think it is time for a new political initiative to go along with the military initiative.'

Sacirbey was speaking after talks with Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind (a marked contrast from the days when British ministers flew into Bosnia to inspect the troops and ignored the besieged Bosnians). But the Bosnian political initiative wasn't necessarily aimed at governments.

Insisting that his government didn't want a dialogue with war criminals, but would only talk to 'responsible' civil leaders, Sacirbey said his government wanted the people of Banja Luka to remain safe in their homes.

He spoke of setting 'an example of mutual co-existence for the future', and bringing about 'a leadership committed to the peace process'. This approach, giving Serbs an option, makes good sense.

It fits what Bosnia's ambassador in Britain, Mohammed Filipovic, has said about contacts

with discontented Serbs; and the stance of the Serb Civic Council delegates, who insist war criminals like Karadzic and Mladic do not represent their people.

Letting ordinary Serbs remain 'safe in their homes' is not just a sound move now, but an earnest of what kind of Bosnia-Herzegovina will be won in the future. As it is, people in Tuzla, northern Bosnia's working-class stronghold, are worried about what happens in Banja Luka.

Maintaining traditions of working-class internationalism, and the multi-cultural principles on which Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded, they have resisted Chetnik onslaught from outside, and Islamic political pressure within. They have had to try and stop embittered refugees from towns like Srebrenica taking their revenge, and homes,

from local Serbs. Under the carve-up plan proposed last year by British and French governments, and partially revived by US envoy Richard Holbrooke, eastern Bosnia, including Tuzla — would be handed over to the nationalist Serbs.

Tuzla is on the wrong side of the map that Croatia's President Tudjman drew on the back of a menu for Paddy Ashdown.

Bosnia's President Izetbegovic might not be sorry to see the irreligious mining town go. Tuzla people don't want to see innocent civilians made to suffer at Banja Luka. Still less do they want to be 'swopped' for the town in some dirty imperialist deal.

Without the lifting of the arms embargo, the Bosnian army is kept dependent on its alliance with Croatia.

It is absolutely in the interests

of Croatia that the Banja Luka area becomes a part of the Bosnian Federation, Croatian minister Bosiljko Misetic said on television.

Following talks with Rifkind, however, Croatian forces halted their offensive and turned their attention elsewhere, to the north and to Herzegovina in the south, where Bosnian commanders had criticised their inactivity against the Chetniks.

Forces

Far from abandoning eastern Bosnia, Bosnian forces intend to retake towns like Zepa, Foca and Srebrenica.

We hope the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces can keep the 'moral high ground' as well as their military gains, by preventing reprisals and atrocities

from their side. But we will not give any ground to those morally bankrupt 'Lefts' and Stalinists waiting to pounce on such lapses as proof that 'all sides do it'.

War criminals like Milosevic and Karadzic remain uniquely responsible for deliberate genocide in Bosnia.

We stand with the Bosnian people, and above all the workers, for one Bosnia and Herzegovina, undivided, a state for all its people, Muslim, Croat or Serb.

That is what they voted for in 1992, and have fought for against all odds, for three-and-a-half years.

Whatever deals are made, and maps are drawn, on menus or at conference tables, they should settle for nothing less. The international workers' movement can only influence events to the extent we offer more than advice.

Hands off Belarus workers!

TRADES unionists in the former Soviet republic of Belarus (Byelo-Russia) have appealed for international solidarity to fight state-organised strikebreaking and repression which the neo-Stalinist government is carrying out for the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Last month the government brought in scabs from Russia to break a transport strike. Two tube train drivers' leaders are now in prison, and the president of the independent unions, Genadi Buikov, has been arrested, along with parliamentary candidate Sergei Antonchek.

President Alexander Lukashenko's government issued a decree last month at the height of the transport strikes, banning union activity and taking away parliamentary immunity.

Political parties which supported the strikers have since been threatened with suspension, as have journalists and newspapers.

Lukashenko, a former collec-

tive-farm manager, won last year's presidential election promising to deal with corruption, and offering economic planning and re-union with other former Soviet republics. But on 12 September he won a vote of confidence from world capitalism, in the shape of a £200 million stand-by credit from the IMF.

Appeal

In a joint appeal for workers' solidarity, the independent union SMOT and the Committee for a Workers Party in Belarus say 'International capital, through the IMF, is once again demonstrating its anti-human nature, supporting the rebirth of a state with a pro-Stalinist regime in the centre of Europe.'

They accuse Lukashenko of respecting neither Belarus laws nor the international conventions which the republic has signed, but of acting through decrees.

In a single year of Lukas-

enko's government there have been more violations of laws and human rights than there have been for years.'

'Under orders from Lukashenko, in the spring of this year, the army entered the parliament, arrested and beat representatives who were on hunger strike.'

'Today, under orders from Lukashenko, the authorities are persecuting workers who are asking only for the labour laws and the collective contracts to be carried out and who are defending their rights.'

In August more than 20 transport strikers were arrested and held without trial in military compounds. A decree dated 21 August banned the activity of the independent trade unions, and the workers' official union on the Minsk Metro.

Union leaders were jailed under a decree that wasn't published until ten days later.

The authorities are sacking Metro workers, and they also want to sack 142 transport work-

ers in Gomel for going on strike.

Igor Azarko, a leading activist in the organising committee of the Workers' Party, is among workers being victimised at the Integral factory, for organising a meeting supporting the strike.

'Today it is clear to all citizens of Belarus that the essence of Lukashenko's power is police arbitrariness and poverty,' the SMOT union and the Workers Party committee say.

Calling on workers' and civil rights organisations in all countries for support, their appeal says: 'Only together can we struggle against the plans of the IMF and against the attempts to re-establish dictatorships in different countries.'

Protests should be sent to: General Procurator Vasili Shovadonov, International 24 Street, Minsk, Belarus Republic 220050. Victor Emilianof, Director NPO Integral, Kazintsa Square, Minsk, Belarus CP220064. Faxes to 70 375 172.

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Dreyfus innocent — official!

BY PIERRE DUPONT

CAPTAIN Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish officer framed on trumped-up espionage charges and sent to Devils Island in 1894 was innocent — and that's official. The French army has finally got around to admitting it!

The acknowledgement came from General Jean-Louis Mourrut, head of the army's historical service, before a gathering of 1,700 people convened by France's Central Jewish Consistory on 7

September. The Consistory's president, Jean Kahn, said Mourrut had said things never previously said by a military man. 'That is, indisputably, progress.'

The Dreyfus Affaire bitterly divided French society in the 1890s.

The 'Dreyfusards' who fought to prove the captain's innocence had to confront a reactionary alliance of army, church and antisemites who claimed there was a 'Jewish conspiracy'.

The republic itself seemed threatened by anti-Dreyfusards

who wanted to reverse the French Revolution, favouring 'patrie' (fatherland) over *liberté* and *egalité*.

It took twelve years' determined campaigning, with fresh evidence, for Dreyfus's conviction to be overturned.

He returned to the army, was promoted to major, and fought in World War I, after which he was awarded the Legion of Honour.

As late as the 1980s, however, the army was able to block a proposal by Socialist Party cultural minister Jack Lang to erect a

statue of Dreyfus in the military academy.

Last year, an article in the army's historical journal questioned the captain's innocence, referring to this only as 'the thesis generally accepted by historians'.

The outcry over this, with Mourrut's predecessor having to resign, made it necessary for the General to make amends.

It's also possible the Chirac administration asked the military not to keep making enemies of citizens.