

Labour Party conference 1995

STOP BLAIR

MILLIONS of working people are waiting hopefully but nervously for the chance to vote out the Tory government at the next general election.

Look at the problems faced by these millions: closures and unemployment; homelessness; breakdown of essential services; destruction of elementary rights of self-defence through trade unions; the wiping out of life-savings by debt and 'negative equity' in homes they thought would give them security.

In addition to these, there is the wholesale offensive against state benefits for the poor, the sick, the old and the unemployed.

Millions will vote Labour in the hope that a Labour government can stop the rot, or that at least cannot be as bad as what we have.

Far from answering the needs of these millions, Blair and his fellow-leaders regard them only as voting-fodder.

They have made it clear that if

BY CLIFF SLAUGHTER
WRP secretary

elects to office, they will continue the attacks begun by the Tories and their backers in the employing class.

Delegates at the Labour Party conference beginning this weekend have the responsibility to face up to this clash of interests and take sides. That means to fight against Blair and all that he represents.

What is the record of Blair and the right-wing Labour leaders? What fight have they ever led?

Look at them and their middle-class circles! Can anyone point to sacrifices or lives devoted to the interests of ordinary people? Is there anything there except careerism and fawning before big business?

And start the fight for socialism

The emperor has no clothes. Everybody knows that Blair and his leadership are not only non-working class, but anti-working class.

Socialists at this year's Labour Party conference have an onerous historical duty.

Abrogated

On the platform will be a leadership which threw out the constitutional procedure, abrogated the rights of the conference and called a special meeting to get rid of Clause Four and the commitment to social ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

The only positive political step for delegates at this conference is to use it to initiate a real struggle to drive out this leadership and set course for a real

socialist party of the working class.

While Blair and Co. devoted all their energies to removing socialist aims from the constitution and trying to sever the link with the trade unions, the working people of Bosnia were being subjected to mass murder, rape and torture, called 'ethnic cleansing'.

Blair's 'New Labour' did not only do nothing. They have given uncritical support to the Tory government's policy on Bosnia and the fascist offensive.

It was left to a small organisation — Workers Aid for Bosnia, whose work we in the Workers International are proud to have initiated with others — to bring working-class solidarity and material aid to the workers of Bosnia, and to rouse sections of the trade union movement to

support. Where was Labour, a party founded by the unions to represent the working class politically?

Just as Blair wants to detach the Labour Party from the trade unions — that is from the working class — so he criminally ignores the needs and opposes the interests of the working class in other countries such as Bosnia.

The uproar three weeks ago about a leaked report on the Blair 'regime' inside the Party was understandable. But is it to die down? Is Blair to be allowed to steam ahead to a 'new order' in which there will be a 'chain of command leading directly to the leader', with this leader in sole command? The question is why is this 'considered necessary'? What is it for?

When that report bemoaned the fact that the Labour Party is not politically homogeneous, it meant that, having got rid of Clause Four, it is now necessary to exclude socialists from any positions, including from the list of parliamentary candidates.

That new regime showed its teeth this week in the unprincipled bureaucratic dictatorship which set out to remove Liz Davies as candidate for North East Leeds. No one could deny that the constituency party followed the rules scrupulously.

Fighting

The so-called 'offence' that Liz Davies 'failed to reveal' was to risk jail for fighting the Tory poll tax. She was unacceptable because of her political views. She appeared to be a socialist! This is the shape of things to come.

Trade unionists and all socialists know that they now have to ask themselves: what party for the working class? A party that insists it will not change the anti-union laws, but still takes the political levy? A party which goes out of its way to renounce socialism in any shape or form and excludes socialists from representative positions and even from the party itself? A party which, through gentlemen like Jack Straw and Tony Blair, promises to be harder on 'law and order', in pursuit of the homeless,

the poor and the youth than are the Tories?

There has to be a fight, beginning now, for a truly socialist party, with socialist policies at home and internationally. It will have to defeat the Blair team, which is, in actual fact, a **Fifth Column** — just as were Owen, Jenkins, Williams and Rodgers, the 'Gang of Four' who deserted to the Lib-Dems.

Wooing

Workers Press asked six months ago, long before Blair's wooing of the Liberals last week: 'What price Ashdown as Foreign Secretary in a Labour Government?' This is not funny.

The anti-working class policies of the National Government of Labour, leader Ramsay MacDonald with its means test were mild compared with what is now being prepared.

At the TUC, Blair referred to the trade unions as a 'vested interest' and said that Labour would govern only on behalf of the whole nation.

In fact it is he who represents the real vested interest, capital itself, and he is doing everything to guarantee to the capitalists that he is better able to deal with the working class than are the Tories.

It is necessary to organise against Blair and his followers. We in the WRP (Workers Press) are working towards a conference early in 1996, where all those who are for a socialist party for the working class will come together to discuss the next steps.

We know that at present there will be many socialists who are members of the Labour Party, and who at this stage believe that the way to a real socialist party is by rescuing the Labour Party from Blair. We take the view that the new party will be much more than just a parliamentary party.

It must be at the head of the mobilisation of the working class itself in struggle for its socialist aims, in even the smallest battles. We are confident that the fight for Labour Party Socialists against Blair will bring them together with thousands of others in such a new party.

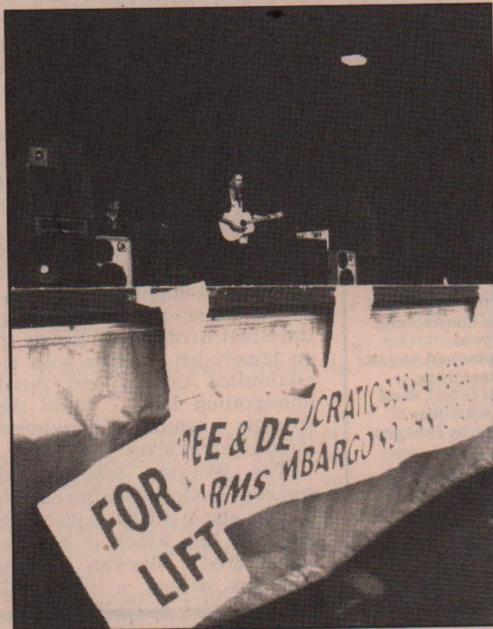
Bands for Bosnia

Last Sunday, TOM ROBINSON (left) was among the many performers at the BANDS FOR BOSNIA benefit in Trafalgar Square.

DESERT STORM, which organised a rave in Tuzla, supplied the sound system.

PHIL PARTRIDGE, who organised the event, tells Workers Press why he did it and how on page 3.

Photos by Faruk Ibrahimovic



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).

For next four issues send £3 to Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, 12 Flitcroft Street, London WC2H 8DJ. Cheques payable to Bosnia Solidarity Campaign. (Please remember to enclose your address!)

Leicester Bosnia Defence Campaign
Demonstration
Saturday 30* September. Assemble 2pm,
Spinney Hill Park, Leicester.
Support multi-ethnic Bosnia
Let Bosnia defend itself
Lift the arms embargo

* Note date change for Leicester demonstration

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

Tickets £18 and £12, the full value of which will be donated to

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Workers Press

Young and old unite!

A RECENT report has declared that a new and significant conflict is replacing the conflict of classes in the 'Western world': the conflict of the generations.

This is the conclusion of the supposedly left think-tank 'Demos', in whose activities former Stalinists are to the fore.

'For most of this century, the main lines of political division in the Western world were those of class. Parties based themselves on the interests of the different classes and the battles over redistribution essentially concerned how much was to be taken from the relatively rich and given to the relatively poor. But as the century draws to a close a new division is coming into view — that of age.'

So wrote Helen Wilkinson and Geoff Mulgan in the 'Independent' of 25 September, authors of 'Freedom's Children: Work, Relationship and Politics for 18-34-year-olds in Britain Today'.

'Age will replace class as the defining and dividing characteristic of British politics' said the 'Independent' in introducing the authors' summary of their report which was carried under the headline, 'Can we really afford to grow old?'

According to Wilkinson and Mulgan, demography is the most visible cause of this change. They point out that at present in the European Union there are 4.5 workers to every pensioner. By 2020 this will have dropped to 4.0 in Britain, 3.5 in France and 3.0 in Germany. In Britain, the numbers of people over 75 are set to double in the next 50 years and the numbers aged 90 and over to rise fivefold.

Their conclusion? That the young will have to pay more in taxes to finance this ageing population as well as making greater private provision for their own old age. Hence the 'generational conflict'.

* * * * *

THIS is reactionary nonsense. Rather than unite the working class against its common enemy, capitalism, this serves only to divide the working class.

It is not a matter of disputing the figures on which such conclusions are based. The development of medical science, the existence of the health service in countries such as Britain, has enabled people to live longer.

But capitalism at the end of the 20th century finds this situation increasingly intolerable. From its standpoint the growing numbers of people outside the labour force are a burden that it can no longer afford.

A retired person, just as an unemployed worker, is quite unproductive, that is neither such person produces surplus value for the ruling class. In times of expanding capitalism this 'burden' can be more or less tolerated. In any case, the working class fought for state-provided pensions for retired members of its class so that they could live out their days with some dignity.

But as Blair and the Labour Party leaders in Britain have made clear, in times of mounting capitalist crisis, these and related benefits can no longer be provided by the capitalist system. The same is true throughout Europe and north America. Everywhere the right to an adequate state retirement pension is under attack.

We know what the 'ultimate solution' to this 'problem' was: the Nazi slave labour camps and the gas chambers. This is how 20th-century capitalism got rid of its 'surplus' population.

The rights of the older workers are under threat. But so are the rights and benefits of young people. Millions of school-leavers are either expected to live on a pittance handed to them by the state or work for wages on which they can hardly survive. In addition, there are renewed rumours (reported in last weekend's 'Sunday Telegraph') that the Tory Party is considering reducing the school-leaving age to 14.

Here is the basis of the unity of the younger and the older generations of the working class. They must unite around a programme of socialist demands that will tackle their common enemy: a capitalist system that more and more plunges the whole of society into barbarism.

Letters

Liberty and Bosnia

CHARLIE Pottins's column (16 September) denouncing my article on Bosnia in the September 'Workers Liberty', does not dispute that the Muslim Solidarity Committee put out a leaflet at the 22 July Bosnia rally defending Islamic-fundamentalist terror in Sudan, nor that a minority of the Bosnian refugees there did prevent a solidarity message from Serbia being read out in Serbo-Croat.

But he seems angered not by the Muslim Solidarity Committee but by me. He suggests that I have seized on "small incidents" as a "smear". I don't think so. The entrance to the hall was heavily plastered with Islamic posters. The rally was delayed for Muslim prayers, and closed with further prayers.

There was a great deal of waving of the Bosnian flag, and a big standing ovation for the Bosnian ambassador. There was no speech criticising the Bosnian government or raising the idea of Muslim-Serb-Croat workers' unity across the war frontlines.

It is not surprising that Bosnian refugees in Britain are strongly nationalist and open to Islamic agitation. But why didn't Workers Press report the event as it really was? For the same reason that it claims that 'opposition to all forms of nationalism' (emphasis added) remains 'a decisive factor in the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina' (Workers Press, 19 August)?

Charlie Pottins responds to the major criticism in my article — that Workers Press dealt with the Croatian 'ethnic cleansing' in Krajina by quoting the Croatian government's bland reassurances — only indirectly, by noting that 'we [WP] advocated the right of Krajina Serbs to return to their homes'. But Workers Press did not criticise Croatia's actions in the Krajina until pushed to, three

weeks later, by remonstrations from Simon Pirani (Workers Press, 26 August).

Chris Reynolds
London SE15

Charlie Pottins replies:

IN the article in 'Workers Liberty', Chris Reynolds accused Workers Press of encouraging anti-Serb chauvinism, using 'the Bosnian people' to mean only Muslims, and treating Serbs as 'the "bad" fascist nation'.

It was a serious allegation, and untrue. I pointed out how absurd it was, since we'd reported Serb opposition to the nationalists and fascists, and carried articles from our Serb comrades of the Workers International, who very much helped to guide our line.

I could add that almost a year ago we reported resistance to evictions of mainly-Serb tenants in Zagreb ('Croat police brutality against tenants', Workers Press, 18 October 1994). What other paper dealt with this?

Chris Reynolds' letter makes no mention of the 'anti-Serb' charge. Does that mean it's dropped? How about an apology then?

Workers Press (12 August) supported the right of Krajina Serbs to either take refuge in Serbia or return to their homes. On 19 August we reported official Croatian statements that they were free to do so. On 26 August, after seeing reports from Croatia, we had a prominent full-length article 'Croat democrats warn Tudjman "Troops" actions contradict promises'. To say we were merely bowing to criticism from a WRP member only reflects Chris Reynolds' own pettiness and insularity.

Why mention a minority of hecklers at a rally (not all Bosnians, by the way) rather than report the speeches which the majority applauded? Why complain about the ovation for the Bosnian ambassador, and not inform people what he said?

Will 'Workers Liberty' report the standing ovation given members of the Serb Civic Council at the Bosnia Forum?

Neither myself nor Workers Press editor Mike Cooke saw the leaflet Reynolds says was distrib-

uted by the Muslim Solidarity Committee. I first saw it mentioned in the Communist Party's 'Weekly Worker', which is bitterly opposed to Bosnia, and to Trotskyism. I understand them making a big deal out of it, but what's Workers Liberty's angle?

Although the Muslim Solidarity Committee accepted the aims of the 22 July demonstration, it did not ask the Workers Press editorial board to approve its leaflets.

There again, we did not ask the Muslim Solidarity Committee's approval for our Workers International leaflet 'Bosnia is part of anti-racist fight', reprinted on 12 August as a Workers Press editorial, which said, *inter alia*, 'When it suits the imperialists to support a reactionary Muslim regime, as in Sudan, they'll do so.'

Workers Press has reported Sudanese workers' struggles against the Islamic regime. We marched with Sudanese political exiles among others on Africa Liberation Day.

Likewise we support Iranian workers against the fundamentalist regime, Kashmiris fighting for an independent, secular democratic state, and Bangladeshi socialists opposing war criminals.

Considering Workers Liberty entertained a speaker from the militant Hizb ut-Tahrir (which considers the Muslim Solidarity Committee too moderate), I'm surprised Chris worries about Muslim posters at the Methodist Central Hall, or Muslims saying prayers. What about the Bishop of Barking addressing the Trafalgar Square rally?

Over the years I've listened to assorted bishops, canons and monsignors at rallies, taken the road from Aldermaston behind cross-bearing Christians and saffron-robed Buddhists, and participated in a Passover seder outside South Africa house (as well as playing Father Christmas in Young Socialist bazaars!).

As a card-carrying Jewish atheist and Marxist I've no problem with some Muslims wanting to say a five-minute prayer. What's your problem, Chris?

If some Bosnian refugees are prey to nationalism and 'Islamic agitation', it might reflect prejudice and lack of solidarity from the Great British Left. Living in an imperialist country with an established Church and racist immigration laws, I think the struggle against chauvinism should start at home.

The Workers International opposes reactionary influences in Bosnia, above all by supporting Workers Aid, which is helping beleaguered Bosnian trade unionists defend a multi-cul-

tured society, and letting Bosnian workers, students and refugees know they are not alone.

Anyone who wants to help such work is welcome, regardless of differences. Some people prefer attacking Workers Press. Well, *cet animal est très méchant. Quand on l'attaque, il se défend!*

Marxism and war

IT'S always a good thing to have misquotations corrected, and I'm grateful to Brian Pearce (Letters, 23 September) for emending my quotation from Karl Liebknecht — which I took, unfortunately without checking it, from the book I was reviewing, Raymond Challinor's 'The Struggle for Hearts and Minds', p.90.

But does Brian really think there's a significant difference between telling the workers of a country which is waging an imperialist war that their 'enemy is at home' and telling them that their 'main enemy' is at home?

In practical terms, these two pieces of advice surely amount to the same thing.

As to the rest of Brian's letter, I had always supposed that there were imperialist wars (i.e. wars of conquest and plunder) long before capitalism entered the stage of imperialism.

Lenin's letter of 30 November 1916 to Inessa Armand says that a war of France and Russia against Germany in 1891 would have been for Germany 'a peculiar variety of national war', and that German socialists would have been right to support it, as Engels advised at the time.

The war that started 23 years later, however, was in no sense a war of national defence, but one for the redistribution of the loot: i.e. an imperialist war.

Lenin's 1916 article 'A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism', which he refers to in that letter, says Marxists should judge the character of a war by analysing its 'substance'.

[We must examine the policy ... that led to and brought about the war. If it was an imperialist policy, i.e., one designed to safeguard the interests of finance capital and rob and oppress colonies and foreign countries, then the war stemming from that policy is imperialist.

If it was a national liberation policy, i.e., one expressive of the mass movement against national oppression, then the war stemming from that policy is a war of national liberation.'

Peter Fryer
London N6

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Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Memorial meeting for Maire O'Shea

Irish republican, communist 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.

Bands for Bosnia

Who's responsible for Bosnia genocide?

Workers Press spoke to PHIL PARTRIDGE who organised BANDS FOR BOSNIA in Trafalgar Square on Sunday 24 September

How did you get involved?

A friend of mine who supports the picket asked me what could be done to provide music in Trafalgar Square for a benefit for Bosnia. There were several problems — the event was only three-and-a-half weeks away and there was only one electric socket in the square.

I agreed, but my first thought was that we could only have disco-sounds and possibly some bands that didn't need amplification. Then I heard that Desert Storm — based on a lorry with a PA system for 'big' sounds — had joined a Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy last Christmas and would take part.

That changed everything. Now we needed a stage and some bands. I contacted agents and followed the trail. Naturally we couldn't get bigger bands at this short notice because of their tight and demanding schedules. But there was so much encouraging support in the music business — everywhere I went there were people who wanted to do something.

I had never organised an event like this before, and I got a lot of support from the music industry, bands, equipment, stage and all related areas.

Money for aid convoys was the key point. They were keen to raise money for humanitarian aid to put together a country which has been almost destroyed. Some of them knowledgably because they agreed with the politics.

But I was not surprised by this interest because as I grew up I was really interested in bands, rock, etc. The image was always given of young people going around in leather causing trouble. But this isn't true.

The bands and their supporters are the most peaceful, caring people with the energy to do massive things. Musicians have been involved in Rock Aid for Armenia, Bob Geldorf's Band Aid, and now War Child for Bosnia.

The musicians who agreed to come to our event were Tom Robinson, Attila the Stockbroker, Ashley Reid and J. Owen Williams, Pink Sly and Ace Percussion, Seven Little Sisters, Show of Hands, Djembe Drummers and Det-Ra-Mental (ex-Fun-Da-Mental). Many others sympathised but couldn't make it.

On the day, the weather seriously affected the attendance. During the afternoon there was a



Phil Partridge

period of sunshine and then the good music attracted an audience, but we have learned a lot about organising such an event and we can do it again — based on that experience.

What did you know about the war in Bosnia?

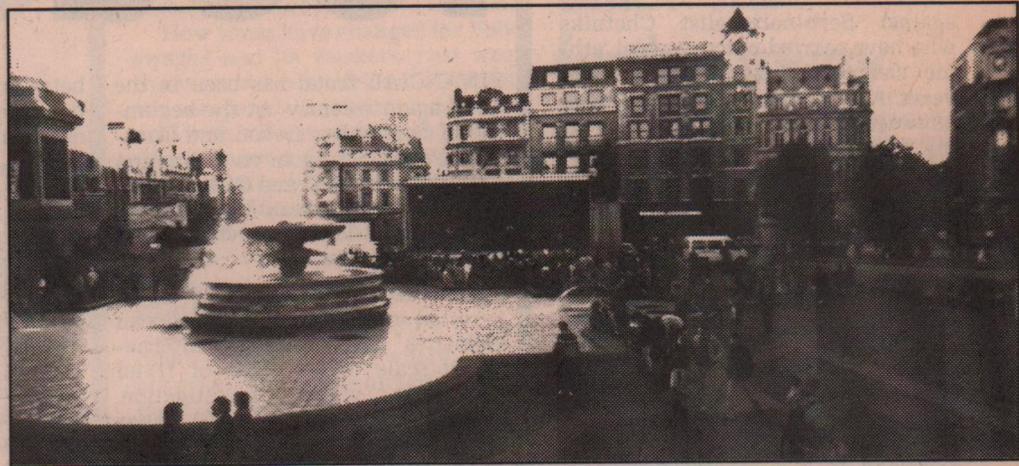
Originally my knowledge of the situation across the whole of ex-Yugoslavia was confused and sparse. Constant media contradictions had effectively created a resistance to wanting to find out about it.

The more you get the confused story, the more it seems to polarise you. Either you put a lot of energy into finding out, or you put a small amount of energy into not knowing. But I learned a lot in the three-and-a-half weeks.

At the beginning I said that I was prepared to organise the event, but I wouldn't go on the picket. Then I read the campaign's material. It was like coming into the light out of the haze. It was credible and well-informed. I did two stints on the picket.

Funnily enough this helped me enormously to organise the event, because actually taking part in the campaign gave me a clearer understanding of what I was doing. It spurred me on to make sure that this event would definitely take place, even if we only had three-and-a-half weeks to organise it.

What I learned from the picket line was that there was considerable support for Bosnia, informed or otherwise, and that the public in this country seemed more confused about what was



The stage for last Sunday's Bands for Bosnia benefit in Trafalgar Square, central London

going on than the tourists passing by.

Why do you think people are confused?

Lately I have heard the news that some Dutch UN soldiers had witnessed the massacre of people in Srebrenica and they were not allowed to speak about it. Video tapes were erased and pictures which the US press agencies had were kept away from the public for two weeks. This is not responsible, investigative journalism — this is lethal journalism. That's why people don't know what is going on.

Were you surprised?

Not really because my other main concern is the care — or lack of it — in the community for people with mental health problems. I have a schizophrenic brother. Two years ago when my mother died, my father and I decided to put money into a group for people with mental-health problems.

The government puts people onto the streets because they fall out of the bottom of the system and then they legislate for the police to arrest them.

The media usually represents anyone with a psychological problem as carrying a knife and likely to murder people. This causes distress and is likely to lead to their committing suicide. Again — irresponsible journalism kills.

Over a year ago I decided to give up my job at British Telecom and devote my life to things which I feel are important. I feel that on both this mental-health

problem, and now on Bosnia, there is something we can do about it, and therefore I will do something about it.

What about the latest reports coming from Bosnia?

When I read about the mass graves, my feeling is horror and anger. But why didn't we know about this three years ago? Where does the responsibility lie for this genocide?

It is in the hands of the people firing the guns, and those giving the orders. But those who did not stop them and kept it quiet are also responsible.

Any informed government, state leader, news agency from the West that failed to report or act are responsible. Information to us — the ordinary people would have generated action. Isn't it a shame that Bosnia didn't have oil that 'we' could fight for?

The importance of the picket is that there is a campaign for humanitarian aid but this is secondary to building the political awareness of what has happened.

The difficulty is that British people are generally apathetic and don't like having to worry about things they do not think they can change, but there is that 5 per cent who are prepared to act, and could change things. We have to get together to make those changes.

Will you organise further music events?

Yes, because a music benefit can

raise money and awareness even if it cannot change the government. It allows people to come together to express their support. But it needs a virtual explosion to change governments.

It is not just a question of changing one party for another party in government. It is also not a question of acting in only one country. It has to be in every party in every country.

Governments cannot correct or change what they did over the last three years. To me, convincing people to change the way their government acts is terrifyingly difficult.

Compared to solving these real problems, putting on a music benefit is simple. But I think it has a place in helping people to come together to express their feelings, raise money and take a stand.

I am certainly ready to organise another event — this time under cover!

It took the European Union 12 months to respond to a plea for food from Bosnia.

The reason behind Bandaid was that governments had failed to act for so long that the musicians had to do something about the problem.

What about bringing over some bands from Bosnia?

Yes. In discussion with a friend from Bosnia, I have the idea of a Yugoslav Thrash-Metal Band to play with bands from Britain. But this means two benefits! One particularly for the hard rock scene and another for the rest.

Prison company under investigation

THE US company that runs Doncaster prison on a £66 million contract is under investigation for fraud in Texas.

And in Canada, prison service officials have suspended negotiations and a New Brunswick team of accountants have been

appointed to investigate the prison company Wackenhut.

The Wackenhut board is dominated by ex-FBI and military officers. Its services — beyond running prisons — include helping break strikes for employers and running under-

cover agents in industry to root out industrial espionage and union organisers.

The Texas investigation involves questions about the use of public funds amounting to \$700,000. When this investigation said that two-thirds of the the drug-programme operators could face fraud charges, Wackenhut denied any impropriety on its part and said it had agreed to carry out the programme at a 'fixed charge' and there was nothing wrong with it keeping any 'saving' they made on the contract.

In Canada, the company was planning to spend more on telephones and faxes than it was on staff training.

In Florida, Wackenhut had hired guards who had been policemen but were sacked for incompetence, being unfit to work with inmates and for steal-

Despite this the British prison service says it sees no reason to reconsider the Doncaster contract. There have been two suicides in the cells in less than a year. And last year, a confidential report condemned the medical service at the prison.

The government's director of prison health services has expressed concern that there were no medical staff at Doncaster with experience of state prisons. One nurse with a background in prison care had been sacked after it was found that he had a criminal record.

Last month, a 40-year-old drug dealer collapsed and died following a suspected overdose in the prison.

Prison Reform Trust director Stephen Shaw said: 'The government cannot honestly face the question because it is committed

Victoria coach defects

WHILE you might not be surprised to find a small-time coach operator to have cut some corners on safety, you'd expect the coaches emanating from central London's Victoria Coach Station to be fully up to scratch.

But, when the Metropolitan Police did a spot check they found that 10 per cent of the 110 coaches in the station at the time had defects. A further 38 had their tachographs questioned. Five

the road and 19 other offences were reported.

So at the very heart of the county's coach network we find the drive for profit undermining safety of passengers being carried at high speeds. With questioning of tachographs come serious worries about long driving hours and inadequate breaks.

Market forces drive the industry as a whole to unsafe practices. Public ownership is the only safe

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Inside left

Unspeakable attacks

Paddy's letter last week (Workers Press, 23 September), saying we waste too much space on the nationalist Workers Party, I hate to bring up the unspeakable again! But I think it's necessary.

Bosnian soldiers are fighting against Serb-nationalist Chetniks who have carried out genocidal 'ethnic cleansing' for three-and-a-half years. According to Alex Callinicos, however: 'The US is effectively waging a proxy war against the Bosnian Serbs, using its air power and relying on the Croats and Muslims to do the heavy work on the ground' (*Socialist Worker*, 23 September).

The Muslim-Croat offensive is leading to large-scale ethnic cleansing, he says. Note the terms used. Two-thirds of Bosnians voted three years ago for an independent multi-ethnic state. Recognising neither Serbs nor their aspirations, Callinicos writes throughout his article to 'the Muslims'.

'Ethnic cleansing' was the cynical term introduced by Serb nationalists for their deliberate policy of wiping non-Serbs off the map. By using it without quotation marks, to describe any flight of refugees, however caused, Callinicos covers up for the criminals who started the war.

The leftwingers who noisily demanded Western action against 'Serbian fascism' — ex-Labour MP Michael Foot, journalists like Christopher Hitchens, Maggie O'Kane and Ed Vulliamy — have been strangely silent these past few weeks, Callinicos sneers.

In fact, Vulliamy was up in the hills interviewing young Bosnians who aren't doing anyone's 'dirty work', but are fighting to get home. Callinicos's silence is his dishonest way of not answering criticism of *Socialist Worker* from former supporter John Pinner, Terry Bell and others.

After tilting at 'Western action' to avoid mentioning workers' action, the SWP has now almost admitted the existence of Workers Aid for Bosnia. The SWP members have seen their own branches supporting it, a few have even helped. But attacking the July Bosnian Solidarity rally because some Muslims jeered a message from Serbia, the September *Socialist Review* declares: 'Those who have called for workers' aid to defend multi-ethnic Bosnia are in reality making such reactionary nationalist. Some have openly endorsed anti-Bosnian chauvinism.'

This is a lie, of course. Workers Aid for Bosnia, which owes much of its inspiration to a Serb comrade, is a reality. Thanks particularly to comrades like Paddy in Cambridge, it has sent 10 convoys to Tuzla, helping Bosnian workers — from Muslim, Serb, Croat or whatever background — maintain unity against all chauvinism.

Socialist Worker would not go after Bosnian trade unionists who are here appealing for help, nor did it report the Serb Civic Council declaration supporting a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Callinicos doesn't use quotation marks for 'ethnic cleansing', but ironically puts them around 'multi-ethnic', to insult the Bosnian workers. Things must be getting desperate, because SWP 'star' Paul Foot has decided to say something about Bosnia in his *Guardian* column (25 September).

Accusing 'those on the left' who support Bosnia of 'Serb-bashing', Foot claims 'the Bosnian-Croatian war' is as bad as 'the Serbs'. He blames 'the victory of nationalist reaction' on 'the collapse of so many leftwingers in Yugoslavia into one of the nationalist camps'. His fans would ask what the SWP did to help resist reactionary nationalist

Charlie Pottins

Crime by Nick Lee

Fraudsters and feed on poor and

FINANCIAL fraud has been in the news again recently. At the beginning of September Devon and Cornwall Police, acting in co-ordination with the Serious Fraud Office, Interpol and the American FBI, pounced on a former Trustee Savings Bank branch in Torquay.

The fact that most of those arrested were from other European countries confirmed the international scale of the type of fraud operation under investigation. Police suspect that some 200 'paper companies' purporting to trade as banks may be involved. Assistant Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall John Albon said: 'There are quite clearly serious ramifications for the international banking system' (*Daily Telegraph*, 9 September).

What he was referring to was the ever closer interconnection between legal and illegal financial activities,

between fraudsters and legitimate banks, which are revealed by the new spate of frauds.

Under investigation is 'blocked fund' fraud — basically a more sophisticated version of what is known in the trade as 'advance fee' fraud. The latter involves fraudsters persuading gullible clients looking to borrow money that they are creditworthy financial companies capable of lending money. You pay an 'advance fee' to receive their bogus credentials and that's the last you see of them.

Legitimate

Blocked fund fraud takes it a stage further: the fraudsters are now getting legitimate banks to underwrite or guarantee their credentials — so they look even more plausible to potential victims.

According to experts, the current spate of blocked funds fraud involved links as far afield as Nigeria and Indonesia. The problem is that once the fraudster disappears into thin air, the legitimate bank that underwrote the fraudsters, financial credentials becomes liable.

Recently Spanish banks faced claims of up to £1.7 million after they had been asked — and some had agreed — to issue documents guaranteeing the value of securities supposedly issued by banks in the former Soviet Union.

The fraudsters would have used these letters, from well-known bona fide banks, to add credibility to their activities and trap investors. Once the fraud was exposed the outraged investors turn on the legitimate banks. The weak link in the chain is the bank which initially issues a guarantee of the fraudster's credit-

worthiness. According to the Crime Control Bureau of the International Chamber of Commerce, fraudsters are targeting banks in the third world and central and eastern Europe, where supervision, and the skills of staff in spotting fraud, may be weaker.

The typical victims of this type of fraud are small businesses to whom the big banks and finance houses are reluctant to lend under conditions of economic unpredictability. The fraudsters step in to fill the gap.

The combination of Tory encouragement of small business as a 'solution' to unemployment has put increased numbers of inexperienced people in the position of being potential victims to this type of fraud.

Meanwhile growing numbers of ordinary working-class people suffering from unemployment and Tory cuts in welfare and social security

Letters

More Letters — page 2

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Don't be put off internet

GEORGE ANGUS is understandably cynical about aspects of the marketing of the internet. However, it would be regrettable if his article obscured the fact that electronic communications are of great value to the labour movement and to individual socialists.

The internet and the web provide a great many useful discussion forums and information sources for trade unionists and activists, as well as for those concerned with the discussion of socialist theory and practice. These are in general free of computer jargon, and can be accessed relatively easily.

I would suggest that new users take a look at a newsgroup called alt.politics.socialism.trotsky (never mind what the long title means for now — it's just a filing system, and with some 10,000 such groups in existence you need one).

There you can debate with members of a range of Trotskyist organisations, and several active independent thinkers (plus a few disruptive anti-socialists). Here you will find more open and honest and robust discussion and tendencies than you can ever get in a typical Conway Hall meeting. Nobody sets the agenda — if you want to start a new topic you just go right ahead and do it, and find out who else shares your concerns.

There are a number of mailing lists where people post longer articles for discussion. Some of these are very productive indeed — for example, the Marxism list generates more text than I get the time to read each day. There is another list devoted to discussion of the establishment of a labor party in the USA.

A number of activists are developing a dedicated trade union network — Labornet, which has access to America, Russia, and most of Europe. At a recent meeting, Vassily Balog, a Labornet participant and leading activist in the General Confederation of Trade Unions (of the former Soviet Union) described last year's first internet labor college, where students and trainers from several countries were able to meet and dis-

cuss through the internet.

George Angus mocks at the availability of information on-line. I would suggest that many activists would welcome having easy access to information resources such as the one set up by UNISON members taking part in the CIX conferencing system. Here you can download the union's rule book, health & safety guidance, and other policy statements, and discuss them with other activists.

And you can gain access to a wide range of important socialist documents — a dedicated group in Colorado is steadily making the works of Marx and Engels available. An enthusiast has uploaded a good selection of DeLeon's works.

And there is an ever-growing anarchist archive of books and magazines. Several US unions and political groups, as well as on-line news providers, will provide you with a much better picture of developments than TV, radio and newspapers available in the UK.

Once you have experienced the efficiency of electronic mail you will not want to go back to posting semi-legible bits of paper through a slow and expensive system.

This comment, for example, will be available at the Workers Press office in less than 2 hours from me reading George Angus's article. In the same posting I will be letting a friend in Moscow know that I have safely received his files, and updating friends in Canada, the USA, Germany and Italy with what I have been doing this week. And they will all have the messages within an hour, and it will have cost me virtually nothing.

There is in fact a great problem of too much information. George Angus suggests that you can run up huge bills for accessing the net and of course this is possible. But most regular users will quickly get themselves a piece of software called an 'off-line reader', which minimises your telephone and connection charges by batching together all your messages and file handling and carrying them out automatically and at high speed.

Internet service provider for no more than four or five minutes per day, at local telephone rates. I pay a system connection charge for these calls, which is about the same as the cost of the telephone time. Not outrageous for access to several hundred items of news, correspondence and information. Contrary to George Angus's assertion, the power consumption of a typical PC is lower than that of a typical domestic TV.

Electronic communication is not a panacea for all the world's ills. Nor is it freely available to the poor. However, even in its present state it is of enormous value to labour movement activists and socialists, and it would be sad if George Angus's luddite outburst dissuaded people from trying it for themselves.

JJ Plant
jplant@cix.compulink.co.uk

Anti-Bosnia shenanigans at SW TUC

I SEE I was the only speaker not to be mentioned in Workers Press's report of the Bosnia Forum (16 September). I wonder if this is due to the fact that I am not a socialist?

No matter — the fact that Lejla Balbanovic liked what I had to say is reward enough. [See report of Lejla's speech at Trafalgar Square, 12 August.] Perhaps if I lived in Bristol or somewhere like that I would be that way inclined, but I don't, and you know what Marx said about 'the idiocy of rural life'.

What I would like to see at the next elections is a Canadian-style wipe-out for the Tories. I don't suppose this will happen, but my local constituency, Somerton and Frome, is the Lib Dems' 15th most likely acquisition. Consequently, voting Labour or Green is not a very sensible thing to do round here, although if this country had proportional representation it would be.

I have no compunction about writing to you about Bosnian topics. Compared with the crap in a lot of other left papers, Workers Press is rather good. It's a bit like being on a 159 bus, I suppose. You want to get from Brixton to Whitehall, and who

cares if either the driver or the conductor is WRP or not? Just to get the job done is the top priority.

Living Marxism's Joan Phillips represents in the left a very extreme case of what is wrong with its response to the Yugoslav débâcle. A milder form of the disease appeared in the South Western TUC, according to the *Somerset Clarion*.

Dave Chapple of Bridgewater trades council had proposed a motion on Bosnia:

'The SW TUC gives its full support to the summer 1995 aid convoy to the Bosnian city of Tuzla and resolves as follows:

'To donate £100 to the convoy's organiser; to join the Scottish TUC, the Annual Conference of Trade Union Councils, the NW & Midlands regions of the Communication Workers' Union, the GMB and other trade union bodies in publicising support for the convoy; to circulate details of the convoy to all affiliated bodies, including details of the continued attempts by Tuzla citizens to maintain a multi-ethnic community; to urge all affiliated bodies to discuss the Bosnia question and to consider financial and practical support for future convoys organised along similar lines.'

The motion was lost by 24 to 14, with 7 abstentions. Mike Graham (SW TUC secretary) said that he had spoken to the TUC international department, who denounced the convoy as a WRP front. Bryn Rowlands said that Thatcher and Clinton and the UN would support the motion.

As I said, I am no socialist, but I know that Combat 18, Sir Alfred Sherman, Nora Beloff, Harold Elletson MP, and all at Thunderbolt Ltd., the UK-Yugoslavia Parliamentary Group, Tony Benn, Diane Abbott, and the Revolutionary Communist Party would also have been hostile to it, but that is just me.

If the SW TUC nomenclature want it that way, they shall have it that way, I suppose. Bosnia is not just a class issue. It should be the cause of all decent people everywhere, no matter what class they belong to. Or race. Or creed.

Tom Carter
Somerton, Somerset

Loan-sharks and desperate

have been moving into debt. According to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, debt is one of the largest problems nation-wide on which assistance is sought.

Debt

There are now 27,000 licensed debt collectors visiting 3 million borrowers weekly. But in the shadows there is the unofficial criminal economy of loan-sharking.

Lending money to desperate people at extortionate rates of interest and then using threats and violence to secure repayment is one of the oldest forms of organised crime. It is booming under present conditions. A recent study by the Policy Studies Institute found rates of up to 1,000 per cent being charged.

A publicity campaign against loan sharks who trap poor and unem-

ployed families into massive rates of interest on loans has recently been launched in Carlisle (*Guardian*, 20 September). The aim is to publicise other alternatives and to help those trapped by extortionate agreements.

The local community law centre is intending to bring court actions against extortionate agreements signed by debtors without proper advice. One of the obstacles is that the law regards any interest rate on repayments as legal once the documents have been signed.

Apart from campaigns to help people become more aware of the state benefits to which they are entitled, many put their faith in credit unions which have grown in recent years. These are akin to the old 'friendly societies' with which the early trade union movement was associated and in which members make a regular payment to a non-

profit-making fund.

There is of course a limit to the effectiveness of such schemes to cushion the full effects of the Tory demolition of the welfare state.

The traditional socialist policy of nationalisation of the banks, or even the more limited aim of nationalising financial and loan services into something like a state-funded national co-operative lending agency would be regarded as anathema to 'New Labour' with its middle-class leadership no doubt well provided with private insurance from impeccably respectable financial services.

Meanwhile the fraudsters and loan-shark merchants will continue to make a killing. Maybe Jack Straw would like to divert some of the energy with which he proposes to persecute traffic light windscreen washers, in the direction of these gentlemen? Some hope!

City Lights

A stricken giant

ITS most popular car sold more than Henry Ford's Model T, the famous Tin Lizzie. It was the symbol of Germany's economic power and export-led growth, its products renowned for their reliability, efficiency and economy. Its workers enjoyed pay and conditions that trade unionists throughout Europe tried to emulate.

How times have changed for Volkswagen and its workers. Last week the executive committee of IG Metall, the company's chief union, signed a deal with VW's bosses which in effect throws overtime out of the window. In future, when orders are low, workers will find themselves working as few as 28 hours a week. When and if trade revives workers will have to do as much as an extra 10 hours, but with no extra pay.

The labour force at VW's biggest plant — at Wolfsburg, where 130,000 are employed — has already shrunk by a fifth over the last decade. This has been brought about by natural wastage. But now management is preparing for compulsory redundancies.

The latest pay deal is a follow-on from the 1993 pay round. VW at that time warned that 30,000 jobs would have to go. The company and the unions arrived at an 'alternative solution' which involved pay cuts ranging from 11 to 15 per cent, depending on grade and a working week reduced from 36 to 28.8 hours.

'Job-sharing' was the magic formula that was supposed to save jobs. Everybody gained, it was said. Governments avoided the need for unemployment pay, the employers escaped having to make redundancy payments and unions did not suffer a drop in membership.

In return for an annual wage rise of 2.5 per cent — hardly in line with rising prices — the unions have accepted a cut in the amount of time taken per hour from the conveyor belt. But the main concession is the surrender of overtime pay, which gives the company the right to raise the working week to 38.8 hours. Now 'job flexibility' has joined 'job-sharing' as the supposed way to overcome mass sackings.

But will it?

Analysts say that VW has got the equivalent of a rise in productivity of between 5 and 7 per cent from the deal. But VW's chairman last week pointed out that the company's capacity is still well above foreseeable demand, suggesting that the workforce remains too large.

'The deal makes sense, but it's not enough. The company needs to cut costs further,' says Professor Daniel Jones from Cardiff University, a specialist on the motor industry. 'Wolfsburg is a dinosaur, a monster, a legacy of the past and they're finding it difficult to unravel,' adds Jones.

Even after the deal wage costs in the German car industry are twice as high as in Britain and, perhaps of more significance, a fifth higher than those in Japan.

This is bound to speed up the trend towards greater production in low wage areas abroad. Already over half of VW's production takes place outside Germany. Other German car firms are expanding abroad.

BMW has opened a plant in the low-wage, non-union state of South Carolina. Opel are expanding in Poland, Belgium and Britain, and Mercedes has plans for three new production lines in France, Spain and Alabama.

These developments have already produced deepening divisions within the opposition SPD. The 'modernisers' — close relations of Tony Blair and company — claim that flexibility is the new name of the new game.

IG Metall representative agrees, but warns of the dangers of forging ahead too rapidly.

If wages are cut too drastically, the internal market will be threatened

he declared after the latest wage settlement. In any case, he declared, 'We can never reduce our wages to the level of Romania, let alone south-east Asia'.

We shall see.

Monetary Union still further away

ITALY's warning that the introduction of a single European currency may have to be delayed long after its projected start date of 1999 was the most significant thing to emerge from the two-day European Union summit in Majorca.

Lamberton Dini, Italian prime minister, issued the warning after the row between Germany and Italy had threatened to blow the summit apart. Theo Waigel, Germany's finance minister, had questioned whether Italian finances were in any shape to allow the country into the first phase of a monetary union. To qualify for entry, member states are supposed to meet tight targets on inflation and interest rates, as well as make large cut-backs on debt and public deficits by 1997.

Now Dini has publicly admitted that his country cannot meet these targets, but warns that several other countries are in the same boat.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development underlined this warning in their latest report on the French economy, which demands tougher action on the country's deficit. Otherwise it cannot hope to meet the targets required for monetary union. It further insisted that the size of the public sector be reduced, that urgent reforms of the pension system be put in place and greater efforts be made to liberalise the economy. The present state pension system will cease to be viable by the year 2010, warns the OECD, unless action is taken now to raise the retirement age, cut the level of benefits and/or raise the rate of contributions.

The OECD's blunt statement said that there was still significant overspending by the government and a shortfall in state revenues compared with the 1995 budget targets. The OECD said that much stronger action was being taken by other European governments. It points out that the number of public officials in France is high compared with other countries and warns that pay settlements in the public sector have outstripped those in the private sector. These conclusions mirror the sharp criticisms of the recent French budget by the Patronat, the French employers' federation, which demanded more spending cuts to tackle the country's problems.

Clearly the French working class will have to pay even more for the privilege of a 'strong franc' and entry into European monetary union.

As the summit ended Dini suggested that the start date for monetary union may have to be further postponed; otherwise the risk was that a small group of countries would go it alone and thus threaten the stability and unity of Europe.

Prime minister John Major was even blunter: if a small group did break away, then the EU might tear itself apart, he said at the end of the summit. No wonder that the Eurosceptic group of MPs in the Tory Party gleefully said that for the moment at least they were winding up their campaign against the government.

These warnings were echoed by Hans Tietmeyer, president of the Bundesbank, who last week declared it was more important to make sure the proper foundations for monetary union were in place, rather than concentrate on a precise starting date.



The Bosnia Solidarity Campaign picket in Whitehall opposite Downing Street in central London

Salute to a 'poor man's McGonagall'

I'M delighted to pay homage to my good friend by correspondence John Mathieson, a collection of whose verses will be published on 6 November: *Life as I See it* (available from J.P. Mathieson, 23 Inchkeith Court, Glenrothes, Fife, Scotland KY7 6RX, £3 post free).

A foreword by Terry Brotherstone gives the main facts about John's life.

He is a Fifer, brought up in the industrial town of Kirkcaldy, whose public library he haunted from the first night it was open. The hardships and mass unemployment of the early 1930s, and the rise of fascism in Germany, soon made this self-educated young worker into a socialist, and before long he joined the Young Communist League.

In the 1970s John attended night school, college, and then Edinburgh University, where he gained an MA degree. In recent years ill health has sadly limited his activity, but has not disabled his pen.

The poems gathered in this booklet are offerings from the heart of a man who, having broken with Stalinism in the 1970s — and having found that, as one of his poems insists, *Trotsky was right all along* — is as passionately committed to socialism and the working class as he was 50 years ago.

In that staunch heart, the fire of class feeling burns as fiercely and as brightly as ever:

*Pick up the pen and make the call
I'll fight the bastards, one and all!...
[S]ure and certain will dawn the day
When Paradise on Earth will come to stay
I will not give up, it's in the blood
Today's trickle will be tomorrow's flood.*

The rich exploiters whom John loathes 'cling to the profit system / Like shit to a blanket'; and



John Mathieson

the poor are adjured to 'Get wise to yourselves / Destroy this system / Before it destroys you!'

John tells the shade of Guy Aldred, who 'Lived for the day of the revolution':

*You didn't see it, nor will I
But will fight on till the day I die.*

And indeed he will. For

*Oh! How I hate the bourgeoisie
For all the things they've done to me
Brought up in a but and ben [two-roomed cottage]
Paupers' clothes to wear, and then
A dead-end job when fourteen
The stupidest work you've ever seen.*

John Mathieson is modest about his writing:

*To be a Byron or a Shelley I will not aspire
Though all their works I do admire.
A 'poor man's McGonagall' is all I'll ever be
That's plain enough, as you can see*

And again:

*I'm just a poet of the working class
One of the many of that neglected mass.*

The comparison with William McGonagall is only partly valid, though. Though John Mathieson has much of the 'charming

PERSONAL COLUMN

naivety', as it has been called, of the Irish weaver's son, his verse lacks McGonagall's reiterated bathos, his ludicrous descent from the would-be sublime into the anticlimactic matter-of-fact.

A more appropriate comparison would be with the calypsonian or the blues singer, for whose artistic purposes strict adherence to metre is never allowed to blur the punch and the pungency.

So it's not surprising to learn that some of these verses are being set to music. That is welcome news, for this is precisely the extra dimension they cry out for.

I should be failing in my duty if I didn't echo Brotherstone's hope that 'perhaps John can be persuaded to write more directly about his life'.

In fact he has made a start. I've had the privilege of reading in typescript the first few chapters of his autobiography, which I found fascinating and inspiring; the first part, entitled *Kirkcaldy in the Thirties — A Worker's View*, is to be published in due course.

I salute John Mathieson's courage, and his ardent passion on behalf of his class.

Never out of date

IT'S many years since I read Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), and when I wrote here several weeks ago on the National Lottery ('The new opium of the people', 15 July) I'd forgotten that book's reference to the Paris Gold Bars Lottery of 1850.

Leeds reader Bob Wood has kindly reminded me of this passage, which is well worth quoting (I use the translation in vol. 11 of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*):

'Seven million lottery tickets at a franc apiece, the profits ostensibly to be devoted to shipping Parisian vagabonds to California. On the one hand, golden dreams were to supplant the socialist dreams of the Paris proletariat, and the seductive prospect of the first prize to replace the doctrinaire right to work. Naturally, the Paris workers did not recognise in the glitter of the California gold bars the inconspicuous francs that were enticed out of their pockets.'

Marx goes on to point out that the affair was 'a downright swindle', since the 'vagabonds who wanted to open California gold mines without troubling to leave Paris were Bonaparte himself and his debt-ridden cronies'.

Besides pocketing part of the profits, these crooks printed false lottery tickets, issuing up to 20 tickets with the same number.

As Bob comments, Marx is 'somehow never out of date'.

Holy suckers

SIMPLE souls wondering at the recent orgy of milk-drinking indulged in by the stone statues of Hindu deities might do worse than read an Italian scientist's explanation quoted here recently ('Infallible apology', 22 July) of an analogous phenomenon, the Catholic church's weeping madonnas.

If an Italian statue can be made to ooze water or 'blood' to deceive the gullible, an Indian statue can with equal facility be made to suck up spoonfuls of milk held to its lips by devotees.

Such miracles are cheap and easy to stage — though when sceptical journalists in a Delhi hotel last week offered a spoonful of milk to a statue of Ganesh, which had allegedly been supping milk all morning, the elephant-headed deity had had enough, and the liquid dribbled down his trunk.

Peter Fryer

Film review by Terry Brotherstone

Hampton's Ham Spray set and Loach's Liverpool lad

'IT WAS a wonderful sight,' wrote the Bloomsbury painter Vanessa Bell on 17 March, 1916. 'Lytton came in with his air-cushion under his arm, looking terribly dignified. He put his cushion down on the chair very deliberately and then sat down and reared his head like some great sea lion and looked slowly round at all the old gentlemen. They seemed terrified by the power of the human eye and evidently only longed to get rid of him.'

Lytton was Giles Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), the poet and essayist, still three years away from a *succès de scandale* with his book of debunking literary portraits, *Eminent Victorians*. The incident took place at the Hampstead Tribunal for the examination of conscientious objectors, and will soon be familiar to cinema-goers who see *Carrington*, Christopher Hampton's debut film as a director. (Best known as the author of the successful dramatic adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Hampton also wrote the screenplay.)

Jonathan Pryce plays Strachey, and looks just like the real person, as photographed in the 1920s. In the tribunal scene he speaks one of the most famous lines in the history of English liberal dissent.

A pompous army officer, confident that he has an unanswerable argument, interrogates Strachey, who has declared his moral objection to the world war, as to what he would do if he saw a German soldier about to rape his sister. 'I believe,' is the reply, 'I should attempt to come between them.'

When Pryce enunciates these words, the only surprise is that it hasn't been done in a movie before. After an unseemly brawl at a party, at which the frustrated lover of the rather earnest painter, Dora Carrington (Emma Thompson) has publicly abused her because of her relationship with the 'bugger' Strachey, one character remarks: 'That was all rather thrilling. Anything more cinematographic could scarcely be imagined.'

And if Pryce and Thompson convince you of nothing else, they should leave you in no doubt that they are playing people whose lives, although sometimes deliciously unorthodox, principled, and even quite private, were 'for the record'.

When Carrington tells Strachey, who finds writing hard work, that he owes it to posterity to continue, he rejoins: 'What has posterity ever done for me?' 'If this is dying,' he pronounces laconically from his final sickbed, 'I don't think much of it.' And one could go on.

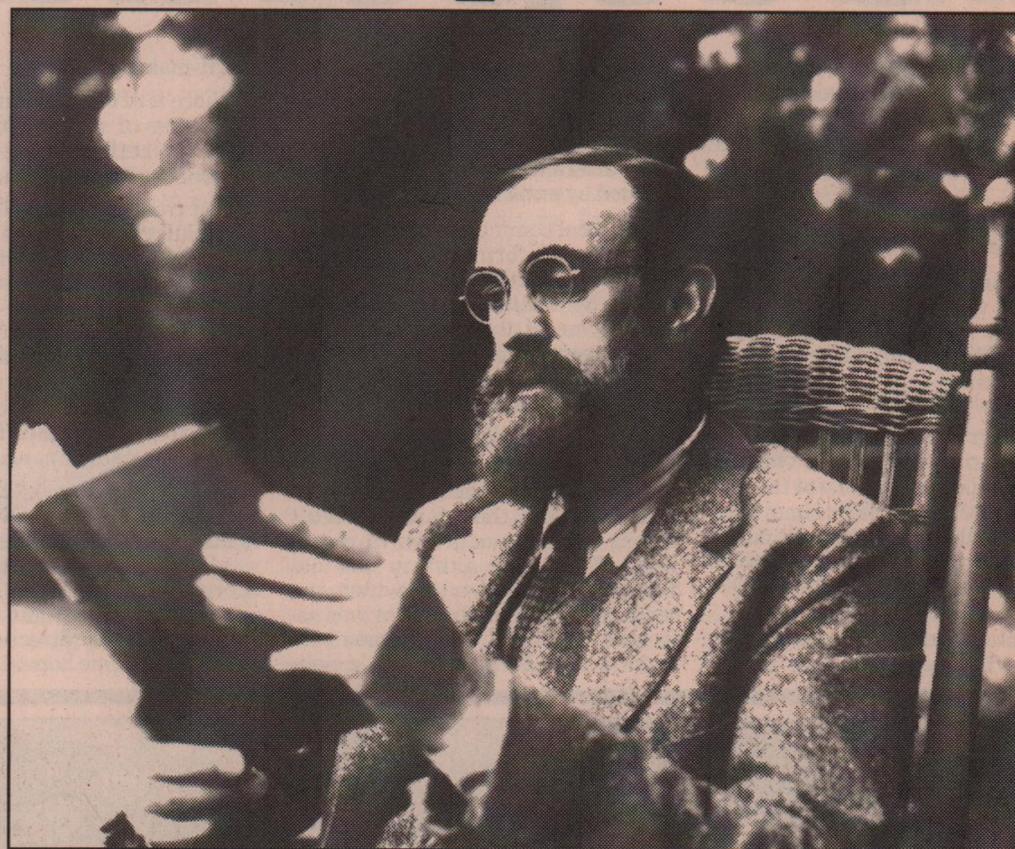
This is an immensely witty film, which achieves a certain type of perfection, not least in the way it convinces you that what it portrays happened just so. Tidmarsh Mill and Ham Spray, the two houses where Strachey and Carrington lived together — at times in a *ménage-à-trois* with Ralph Partridge (Steven Waddington) — are lovingly recreated. But...

What was the source of the dissent Strachey represented so elegantly? How important was it?

How did it relate to the world-changing events of the time, the Russian Revolution, the Irish national struggle, the general strike, or even the treatment, during the war, of the general run of British conscientious objectors? As Carrington remarks to Lytton, 'They'll never send you to jail. Too many of them went to school with you.' Many were not so lucky.

Denounced

The film could not reasonably be expected to answer these questions, but it might at least open up the possibility of their being asked. Strachey is denounced — absurdly — by Partridge (whom Carrington marries at least in part because Lytton fancied him).



Jonathon Pryce as Lytton Strachey in Christopher Hampton's directorial debut *Carrington*

as a 'Bolshevik', and there's a complaint at one point about the price of coal. But on the whole everything seems to take place in a self-contained, sun-drenched world. Despite the literary intelligence Hampton brings to it, and Pryce's admirably convincing performance, *Carrington* comes close to descending to the level of an offbeat variation on the 'heritage' school of cultural history.

At its recent Edinburgh Film Festival showing, executive producer John McGrath suggested that *Carrington* and Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* might be linked, in that each tells a story from a different side of the same progressive tradition.

Perhaps McGrath, a Liverpoolian by birth, a Scot by adoption, and a socialist by conviction, was feeling uneasy at being associated with something so unchallengeably liberal, and so quintessentially home counties English, as the Hampton film. His point might perhaps set the agenda for an interesting historical discussion, but it seemed very strained with regard to the two movies.

Land and Freedom, regular Workers Press readers will now know, is about an unemployed Communist Party member from Liverpool, David (Ian Hart), who goes to defend the Spanish Republic against Franco's Fascists in 1936, joining the POUM militia rather than the Communist-led International Brigades.

Through his experiences in battle, and in the behind-the-lines Republican civil war in Barcelona, he learns that the Communist International, pursuing Stalin's diplomatic goals, fears social revolution in Spain far more than a Franco victory, and that this determines the nature of its 'support' for the Republic.

These lessons enter not only David's thinking, but also his very being, as a result of his passionate love for Blanca (Rosana Pastor), a courageous militia-fighter, ultimately killed as the counter-revolutionaries take control of events.

We know from the way the story is told that he remained a militant — after David's death, his granddaughter Kim (Suzanne Maddock) finds an assortment of

socialist literature in his flat, and reads through his letters from Catalonia to the Liverpool woman who was then his fiancée and became his wife.

But we have to assume that he never found a way satisfactorily to communicate the story of the lessons of the Spanish revolution to his family, and perhaps, given the mythology with which the Stalinists of the Communist Party successfully surrounded these crucial events for so long, to anyone other than a few close comrades either.

Kim seems instinctively to grasp that the pain of Blanca's death, and the impossibility of her grandfather's talking about it to his wife, must have turned the whole experience into a gnawing, private grief.

At the funeral which ends the film, she says nothing of what she has discovered, but asserts what may be her own emergent commitment to her dead grandad's cause, by reading lines from William Morris found among his papers. They speak of 'the battle wherein no man can ever fail./ For whomsoever fadeth and dieth/ Yet his deeds shall prevail.'

Praise

Land and Freedom is going to be seen very differently by different people. To me it is the best film Loach has yet made, which is high praise. It uses a fictional narrative to tell a real history in a living way.

It is politically sharp and honest, but makes its politics felt through a human story. Those, be they for it or against it, who see in it primarily its propaganda value (and propaganda is not used here as a dirty word) will not, I think, appreciate it to the full.

David has a dual purpose in Spain: to fight the fascism abroad that he sees as intimately connected to the forces which at home in Liverpool make him live on the dole; and to find his own inner being, his own confidence to try to exist in a human way in a society which essentially denies him that possibility.

The central relationship between David and Blanca is not a romantic prop on which to hang a political story. It is the core of the film, the thing that gives this

fiction such a sense of historical truth.

It explains both why David learnt so much from his military experiences about Stalinism and its counter-revolutionary betrayal, and why he was evidently able to make such little use of his knowledge during the subsequent half century of his life. The hotchpotch of pamphlets that Kim finds show he stayed true to the cause, but also that he found no clear politics through which to put into practice the lessons of his Catalan experiences.

Even at such a distant remove he has clearly told Kim nothing. Family, and a few figures from the local labour movement, attend the small funeral, and clench their fists. But they do not know what to say or what to sing (in contrast to the movingly militant funeral scene in Spain where dead warriors are buried). The film is open-ended. It asks us to pick up the pieces, and see that the struggle lies ahead and that it is ours to win.

So much more could be said, including of course things about the film's weaknesses. Not all criticisms will be absurd or motivated by reactionary prejudice. It is a great virtue of Allen's and Loach's work, indeed, that it creates the possibility of a serious discussion. Readers, as they manage to see *Land and Freedom*, will, I hope, be moved to conduct that discussion in these columns.

See *Carrington* too if you can, if only for the contrast. (Though, incidentally, there is one concealed link between the two films in that one of Carrington's lovers, Gerald Brennan (Samuel West), who goes to live in Spain, also wrote well about its trauma in *The Spanish Labyrinth*.)

Where *Carrington* is all surface perfection, a finished package that almost defies criticism, *Land and Freedom* is borne along with raw, democratic energy and fearless confidence in a story it convinces you had to be told.

For all its virtues, the Hampton movie makes you think that when the French *nouvelle vague* director François Truffaut said that the words 'British' and 'cinema' seemed incompatible, he might have been right. But Loach progresses wrong.

The present political situation in Iran

and the tasks of the revolutionary left

The following has been written by M. RAZI of the Iranian Revolutionary Socialists League (see last week's Workers Press). We republish it here (with permission) as part of the discussion on the need for a new internationalist party of the working class

THE present political situation in Iran is explosive. The 'rulers' are not able to rule and the 'ruled' are revolting against them.

Only a few months ago, on 4 April, the residents of Islam Shah, south of Tehran, who are mainly young workers, revolted against the regime and took control of their town of 500,000 residents. Although more than 50 people were killed and several hundred arrested, the regime was eventually forced to meet their demands for the provision of drinking water.

Again, towards the end of July, 4,000 workers at Benz Khavar, a German-related lorry assembly plant, went on strike for higher wages and 15 days' paid holiday a year. This strike has been temporarily ended pending renegotiations this month (September).

The textile workers of Gaem Shar have also gone on strike, on 12 September, for higher wages. These actions followed on from previous demonstrations of Iranian oil workers and mass upsurges in several towns during the past two years.

We are unable to deal here with all aspects of the working-class movement during the last 16 years under the Islamic regime

and we shall only deal with the following two points:

■ The class nature of the present bourgeois regime and its political and economic crisis; and,

■ The present nature of the working-class movement and the tasks of revolutionary socialists.

The class nature of the Iranian regime

THE Islamic Republic is a capitalist state of a specific type. It is a clerical-capitalist state. To understand the class nature of this regime one has to examine the role of the clergy in the capitalist development of the last century in Iran.

The clergy has always played a central and prominent intermediary role between the monarchy, the landlords and the poor mass of people in society. At each revolutionary period they took the side of the bourgeoisie and used the trust they had gained within the masses to suppress them.

In 1906-08, during the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, a sec-

tion of them played a counter-revolutionary role. The clergy have in one way or other been part and parcel of the bourgeois state.

However, the development of 'modern' capitalism in Iran in the 1960s, implemented by the Shah, who pursued a Westernising policy, pushed the clergy aside from the centre of power. From then, the clergy became an opposition force to the Shah's regime. Khomeini's fight against the Shah was never an anti-capitalist struggle, but a fight to achieve the lost power and involvement within the bourgeois state.

In 1979, the clergy, by using the anti-despotic mass upsurge of the Iranian people, succeeded in mobilising an insurrection against the Shah and rode to power on the back of the masses. This was done smoothly because of the absence of any working class leadership.

The pro-Moscow Tudeh Party did mobilise the masses against the Shah, but it also compromised with a section of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the Fedai's 'guerrilla' activities were running out of steam.

The political crisis

FROM the start of the new

regime, two opposing tendencies emerged in the clergy.

One was for holding power in a clerical sense through a 'semi-feudal' capitalist state with numerous centres of power. It favoured the strict implementation of Islamic law while putting forward anti-Western slogans and sentiments.

The second tendency wanted to establish a modern, centralised capitalist state, similar to the Shah's, which would be pro-Western and in which the bourgeoisie would run affairs.

So, from the outset, the conflicts and contradictions were to resolve this issue: what form of bourgeois state should be re-established? And after 16 years, the conflict between the tendencies and the political crisis has not been resolved.

In the West, the pro-Western tendency of the Iranian regime is usually referred to as 'moderate' or 'pragmatist', and the clerical tendency as 'radical' or 'hard-line'. Of course the leaderships of both tendencies have changed over the past 16 years, with some leaders shifting from one tendency to the other.

However, at present, the 'moderate' tendency is led by Rafsanjani, the president, and the 'radical' tendency by Khamenei, who succeeded Khomeini as the spiritual leader of the Islamic Republic.

Generally speaking, the 'moderate' tendency has been gaining ground by building links with the West, encouraging foreign investors and establishing a more centralised state. But this shift is a slow and painful process, as the political conflicts in the ruling clique have persisted and the political crisis has not been resolved.

Next year, the crisis will come to a head at the presidential election — Rafsanjani himself is unable to run again and it will be difficult to find a replacement without major political upsets.

The relationship between the Iranian regime and the West also has to be seen in the light of the faction fights within the regime. The Rafsanjani regime has done its utmost to establish a normal relationship with the West, but progress has been slow and there has been many setbacks because of repeated interventions by the 'radicals'.

One of the major issues blocking better relations is the Salman Rushdie affair. The 'radicals' have consistently stressed that Khomeini's *fatwa* — calling for Rushdie to be killed — should be implemented. But Rafsanjani has been trying to find ways out of this impasse.

However, during last year, some predominant figures within the regime have called for a reversal of the *fatwa* or separation of religious issues from politics. But all these people have been severely attacked by the 'radicals' and one was even threatened with death.

The economic crisis

ECONOMICALLY, the situation is even worse. The country's banking system has been hit by a long list of embezzlements. The total sums embezzled in four cases made public up to now range from \$33 million to more than \$400 million.

For example, the manager of the Bank Melli Iran (National Iranian Bank) in Khuzestan (south Iran) has been charged with embezzling \$1.7 million and

branches face charges of misappropriating \$7.5 million. The authorities tried to cover up these frauds as some of those involved were influential people, like the brother of Rafiqdoust, the head of the 'foundation for the deprived and war-disabled'.

Also, the Rafsanjani regime has received more than \$30 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund and from German, Japanese, Italian and other Western banks. The arrears on these loan repayments by 1993 were in the region of \$8 billion. According to the governor of the central bank, these arrears will reach \$18 billion by 2006, with an annual interest of \$700 million.

More than half the working population is unemployed. Inflation is more than 60 per cent, and the prices of basic foodstuffs — like rice, meat, eggs — is going up daily. Meat is currently 10,000 rials a kilo, a chicken is 5,000. The average wage of an Iranian worker is 10,000 rials a day (\$2 on the open market).

As a result, workers and even the middle class are forced to get several jobs to survive. In the past three years, Islamic rules and regulations relating to the economy have been replaced by a Rafsanjani's 'readjustment' policy — basically a pro-Western economic policy in line with satisfying the terms of IMF loans.

But none of these policies has been successful. Only a few months ago, the free-market exchange rate of the Iranian rial (IR) reached the record high of IR7,000 to \$1. In 1979, the rate was IR100 to \$1. By government intervention, this figure has recently been held down at IR4,000 to \$1.

With such a high exchange rate it is difficult for factory owners to meet the costs of imported raw materials and spares. This year industrial output will drop to below one-half capacity. This will worsen still further the economic stagnation in Iran.

Tasks of revolutionary socialists

The nature of the working-class movement

SINCE the end of the eight-year war with Iraq in 1988, there have been more than 400 large and small strikes. These strikes have been organised by clandestine strike committees. These action committees, unlike the claims of the Iranian left opposition and centrist organisations, have been formed and have struggled completely independently of them.

The action committees have been composed mainly of the youth who returned from the war or of students or of young workers. We call this layer which has been involved in organising these committees and strikes the new vanguard of the working class.

However, these activities have been mainly spontaneous, and the workers have not been able to form a centralised organisation or develop a revolutionary political programme.

Building the revolutionary leadership

revolutionaries at the present time is to win over the vanguard of the working class to a revolutionary programme, based on the concepts of the Permanent Revolution, the Transitional Programme [founding programme of the Fourth International (1938) written by Leon Trotsky] and Leninist organisation.

All the existing centrist organisations have failed to do this. Programmatically, they support the two-stage revolution, the division between a minimum and a maximum programme, and a Stalinist rather than a Leninist method of organisation. They have failed to orient towards the working class, and therefore they have not attracted any vanguard workers to their organisations.

Now, with the collapse of Stalinism, the majority of the organisations which supported the Soviet Union are themselves in deep crisis and on the verge of collapse.

However, to win this new vanguard is not a simple matter, as they have developed a strong anarcho-syndicalist trend. The task is to win these elements politically and build a revolutionary organisation with them, rather than by-passing them, as practised by most groups.

Building a workers international organisation

IN OUR OPINION, building a vanguard party in Iran is inseparable from building an international vanguard party. Because the final victory of the revolution in Iran will depend on the revolution in the region and the major countries in the world.

The international organisation which is aiming to implement the task of preparing for the world socialist revolution should be a party which should attract the most serious, disciplined militants on a world scale, due to its active participation in every movement by oppressed layers against the capitalist states.

Therefore this organisation should be recognised and trusted by the workers and oppressed masses of the world and be able to establish a political leadership by giving clear revolutionary directions to all of its sections and oppressed masses — as was the case with the Third International (the Communist International formed after the 1917 Russian Revolution) during its first four congresses.

This can only be achieved by having a strong international centre which regularly debates the results of interventions of militants on a world scale and major political issues relevant to the workers and oppressed masses. These debates should be published regularly as internal discussion bulletins and eventually in an international journal. Only by this method can the practical and theoretical experiences of militants on a world scale be centralised and used in everyday class struggle.

September 1995

The Iranian Revolutionary Socialists League is formed from various Iranian revolutionary tendencies who believe in the Transitional Programme, the Permanent Revolution, and the Leninist party. Their paper is *Kagar-e Socialist* (Socialist Worker). For more information contact: IRS, PO Box 14, Potters

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The Present Political Situation in Iran and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Left

By: M. Razi
Iranian Revolutionary Socialists League



IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS LEAGUE
IRS, P.O.BOX 14, POTTERS BAR, HERTS, EN6 1LE, ENGLAND.

Bosnia: struggle goes on

'We have debt to pay to the dead' — Bosnian General

AS Bosnian, Croat and Serbian foreign ministers negotiated in New York last week, Bosnian soldiers uncovered further grisly reminders for the world of what kind of enemy they have had to fight.

In a pit in the woods at Crvena Zemlya, north of Kljuc, north-western Bosnia, recently recaptured from the Serb-nationalist Chetniks, they found human bones, skulls, some of them smashed in.

The ten-foot wide grave in a former cave entrance would have taken many bodies to fill. Pieces of clothing had been found in another hole nearby, and the soldiers were checking for booby-traps before delving further.

'These mass graves call out to us,' said General Atif Dudakovic, commander of the Bosnian 5th Corps from Bihac, camped nearby. 'We have a debt to pay to the dead.'

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

The US-backed New York agreement would maintain Serb and Croat-held regions within Bosnia and Herzegovina, with internationally-supervised elections in six months time.

Bosnians doubt what sort of free elections can be held with

Salt — a weapon of war

BY MIRZA MUKIC
Independent journalist
Bosna Est, Tuzla

WHILE salt in Tuzla costs 15p a kilo, in Gorazde it has reached a price of £40 and people are becoming sick due to the lack of this essential mineral and cooking ingredient in their diet.

War is a time when everyday needs assume an all-consuming importance and in Bosnia this is the case with table salt, which in peace time never presented any problem. The north-east Bosnian town of Tuzla is made of salt and used to supply the whole of ex-Yugoslavia.

The Tuzla saltworks used to produce about 200,000 tons of table salt and it had a large market for its produce. The 1,500 salt workers in Tuzla had relatively high standards of living and wage levels.

At the beginning of the aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina a large quantity of salt was in reserve. The works were not severely damaged so it has been possible to produce salt and to meet the requirements of the market. Tuzla and the surrounding region have not experienced the salt shortage.

This shortage has been in the besieged enclaves where Karadzic and his extremists have strictly controlled the aid going into these areas. The UN High

Commission for Refugees has been 'unable' to assist. According to reports by refugees from Srebrenica when they arrived in Tuzla, prior to the town's fall a kilo of salt had fetched as much as £60. It was no longer used as a cooking ingredient but had assumed importance as a medicine.

It is well known that when salt is removed from the diet that serious physiological disorders occur in the function of certain glands. That was well known to Karadzic's Chetnik forces and if they let anything in to the besieged towns it was only convoys with flour and other foodstuffs, but they prevented salt reaching the inhabitants.

The same now applies to Gorazde. The Chetniks' aim is to physically exhaust the inhabitants and force the people to leave their town so it falls like Srebrenica and Zepa without a fight.

No one knows how to resolve this problem. Tuzla, where salt is produced, is only 150km from Gorazde but it has been impossible to transport this vital mineral to where it is desperately needed.

The UN — which has shown its many weaknesses in many situations — has to be more determined and help the people. It must prevent such manipulation. Foodstuffs like salt mustn't become a weapon of war like rifles or guns.

Translation Faruk Ibrahimovic

war criminals like Karadzic and Mladic still at large; or the Croat racketeers in Mostar. The Serb nationalists have already taken steps to reduce opposition votes. The evidence is at Crvena Zemlya.

The Chetniks took over the Kljuc area with help from the Yugoslav National Army in the Summer of 1992. About 11,000 Muslims from the area are unaccounted for. UN military observers said testimony from survivors suggested there might be up to 40 mass graves.

For Senad Medanovic, 25, from Prhovo, a nearby village, the statistics meant less than the cheap necklace with the name 'Enesa' engraved on its tag, given him by a refugee woman returning from Bihac. She was the mother of his sister Enesa's boyfriend.

Serb forces arrived in Prhovo on 1 June 1992. The Medanovic family were in their home. Assuming the Chetniks were after men of military age, Senad escaped to the woods. He never saw his sister or the rest of his family again.

Of the 71 people who lived at Prhovo, only two survived. One went to Slovenia. Senad was captured by Serb forces, his life only spared when an old Serb whom he had helped interceded for him.

He spent 17 months in their prisons, was beaten and had his ribs broken, before being freed in a prisoner exchange. He returned

to Prhovo with the Bosnian army last week.

Many, like him, have fought their way home only to find their families gone, and discover mass graves. They are unlikely to be in a mood of forgetfulness or compromise.

Bosnian and Croat forces halted their advance on the Serb-held town of Banja Luka last weekend, and the Croatians began to withdraw across the border. The Chetniks boasted of reinforcements coming from Serbia, commanded by Zeljko Raznatovic, better known as Arkan, the criminal responsible for some of the worst atrocities in 1992.

In Belgrade, Vojislav Seselj's fascist Radical Party held a 10,000-strong rally denouncing President Milosevic for supposedly abandoning the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.

Bosnian troops stepped up an offensive in the Brcko area, threatening to cut the narrow neck linking Serb-held territory with Serbia proper, and open Tuzla's northern route. The next step would be either to tighten a noose around Banja Luka, or turn east to commence liberating the Drina valley.

Revealed

Imperialist plans revealed last year would hand the Drina towns, including Gorazde, over to Serb rule. US government envoy Richard Holbrooke secured a

promise from Croatia's President Franjo Tudjman on 20 September in London the same day John Major urged Bosnia's President Alija Izetbegovic to agree to a ceasefire, and stressed the European Union's part in reconstruction.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Mohammed Sacirbey said Sarajevo's services must be restored, the road to besieged Gorazde reopened, and Banja Luka demilitarised before there could be an overall ceasefire. Sacirbey also said that there would not be a confederation between Bosnia and Croatia, as the US government-sponsored accords last year provided.

After delay, Sacirbey flew to New York for peace talks on Tuesday. The Bosnian government had held out for an assurance from US envoys that Bosnian sovereignty would be maintained, and Serb-held regions would not be able to secede and join Serbia. The only blot on this shield of resistance to ethnic partition was President Tudjman's determination to repatriate 100,000 Bosnian refugees to recaptured territory.

'Since large amounts of territory have been liberated both in Croatia and in Bosnia, it's quite normal that people return,' Tudjman said. But apart from the problem of people having to return amid the unfinished busi-

ness of war, the territories recaptured are not necessarily those from which people fled. This strengthens suspicion that Tudjman would accept an imperialist carve-up, swopping territories and populations.

Embargo

The continued UN arms embargo against Bosnia leaves the Croat government the stronger partner in the alliance, while geography enables it to control supplies. Still hoping to recover eastern Slavonia — possibly in exchange for parts of Bosnian territory — Tudjman has brought forward Croatia's elections, as opponents predicted, to exploit recent military triumphs for his party.

Expressing optimism that the New York talks were a step to peace, US President Clinton, doubtless mindful of his own coming election campaign, said Bosnia would not be partitioned, but would remain an internationally-recognised single state.

Mohammed Sacirbey said Serb war criminals had been allowed to dictate terms, and it remained to be seen whether the agreement would work. Having forced Clinton's promise by their political and military determination, the Bosnian people aren't likely to abandon their struggle for a promise.

Palestine deal doesn't bring freedom

BY DAVID DORFMAN

AFTER almost three decades under Israeli military occupation, Palestinian areas of the West Bank — including towns like Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Tulqarm — are due to see the back of Israeli soldiers by next Summer.

The agreement was reached after nine days of negotiations in Taba, the Egyptian coastal resort, between Palestine Liberation Organisation chair Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

At one point Arafat reportedly stormed out protesting 'we are not slaves', but came back later to sign.

Under the 1993 peace accord signed by the PLO and the Israelis the troops were supposed

to have been withdrawn by this year. Elections will take place for a Palestinian Council which will be responsible for public order and internal security.

Palestinians in East Jerusalem, unilaterally annexed by the Israeli state and surrounded with expanding settlements, will be allowed to vote, but will remain under Israeli rule.

The important town of Hebron, with 100,000 Palestinian Arab residents, will remain garrisoned by Israeli troops to protect the 450 militant Zionist settlers who remain, armed and dangerous, and opposed to the peace agreement.

It was in Hebron last year that Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli reserve officer and settler from Kiryat Arba, went into the mosque with soldiers, and murdered 60 worshippers.

While the Israeli government presented the killer as a lone madman, his admirers treat him as a hero, and produced celebratory T-shirts.

In the Jerusalem area, strategically-sited Jewish neighborhoods like Ma'aleh Adumim plan continued expansion, while Arab building is squeezed out by land-grabbing and discriminatory planning laws.

In the remainder of the West Bank area there are 140,000 settlers, and Israeli armed forces will remain to protect them, as well as guarding military bases and strongpoints.

In some 450 Palestinian towns and villages, Israeli forces will retain overall control even though Palestinian police will be patrolling. Nothing appears to have changed yet in the vital allocation of power over land and

water, or economic development.

In effect, the Palestinian national authority is like a local authority, saddled with responsibility for education, health, and social affairs, while the Israelis control the resources. It will be policing its people for Israel.

Hannan Ashrawi, who took part in the original Palestinian negotiations that were overtaken by Arafat's secret diplomacy, described the agreement as a step forward, but not yet the statehood her people want.

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) described the deal as a 'disaster'.

Ali Abu Hilal of the DFLP said it would leave Israel in effective control of 70 per cent of the West Bank. His organisation called a general strike to mark the deal ceremony on Thursday, and said the struggle would continue.

War crimes' shadow on peace talks

TALKS between Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat of the PLO might have been held in Cairo, had it not been for some grim events of the 1956 Suez war and 1967 Arab-Israeli war coming to light. Peres ruled out going to the Egyptian capital for fear of angry demonstrations.

Retired Israeli General Arieh Biro admitted last month that he had machine-gunned 49 Egyptian prisoners of war captured in the Sinai desert in 1956.

Biro said he did it because he had been ordered to advance, and

could not spare men to guard the prisoners. He said he had feared that if left they might be able to betray Israeli positions to their comrades.

The revelation led to more. An expedition sponsored by the Cairo daily Al-Ahram and led by Abdel Salam Moussa, a former air force officer taken prisoner in 1967, found a mass grave near El Arish, and dug up human bones. They estimated there had been about 90 bodies there.

Moussa said he had watched Israeli troops shoot down a line of military and civilian prisoners.

'When they were dead, they told us to bury them.'

A local Bedouin, Soliman Salama, led them to another mass grave about 15 miles away, where he said the Israelis killed about 30 Egyptian soldiers who had surrendered.

Spurred on by public feeling, the Egyptian authorities are demanding that Israel make a full apology, investigate the incidents, and punish those guilty as war criminals.

'This is not just a political issue,' says Major General Ahmed Fakhr, 'this is an issue of families

who were told that their men were missing in action. Now, after 20 years, they learn they were slaughtered in cold blood by the Israelis.'

Israeli Attorney-general Michael Ben-Yair said last month that nobody could be prosecuted for offences committed in 1956 and 1967, because of a 20-year statute of limitations.

But Egyptian State Information director Nabil Osman says:

'The truth has to be made clear. Such crimes are against humanity, and they just don't fade away.'

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