

Rail dispute is political struggle FULL SUPPORT FOR SIGNALS' STRIKE

THE TORY government has declared war on the signal workers.

The Tories want to impose severe wage cuts on all rail workers. They want to break up British Rail and sell it off for peanuts to their City cronies.

If they get away with this, they will set out to do the same to the rest of the working class.

The signal workers are not just fighting their employers. They are fighting a political battle against the Tory government.

It is clear that the employers, Railtrack, wanted to settle the signal workers' wage claim. The government stepped in and said: 'No'.

The signal workers are fighting a Tory government that is:

- Hell-bent on destroying the health service.

- Condemning tens of thousands to homelessness.

- Forcing thousands to work for starvation wages, in the name of 'job creation'.

- Setting out to break up effective trade unionism and with it any defence that working-class people have against their employers.

The task is to unite all these forces in a common struggle to defeat the government. Signal workers are fighting for a decent wage. Along with other workers, after years of cuts in their wages, they are finding it impossible to live.

Tired

The 'travelling public' are at the moment on the side of the rail workers. Like other sections of the middle class, they are sick and tired of the Tory government.

Everything depends on how the struggle is developed and led. The leaders of Rail, Maritime and Transport Union are threatening to extend the strike action to two days a week. All workers must back them in this move.

But even more, the railworkers must not stand alone!

This was the bitter lesson from the 1984-85 miners' strike. There was massive popular

feeling for the miners' fight. In the face of this, the TUC and Labour Party leaders deliberately set out to isolate the miners and drive them back to work defeated.

In one respect nothing has changed. The TUC wants to see the signal workers defeated. If the rail workers win their just fight these trade union leaders, together with the employers, know that this could trigger off a powerful wages movement that they might not control.

Fraudulent

Last week the union leaders met with representatives of the government and big business in a fraudulent discussion about how to achieve full employment (see editorial — page 2).

In reality they gathered to work out the best way of containing and breaking up the mounting anger of the working class against the Tory government.

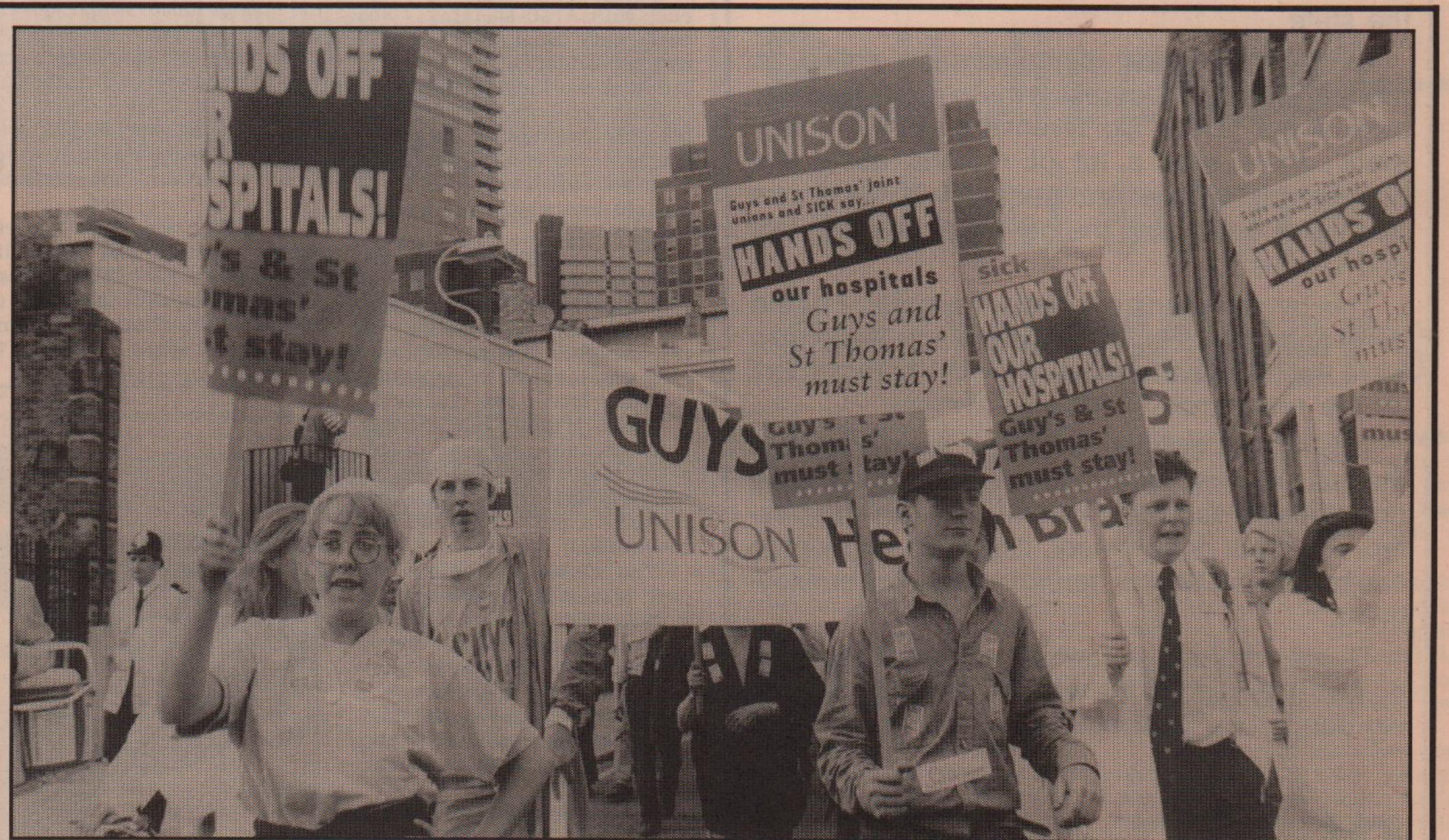
Signal workers must fight to extend their fight into the rest of the working class: in the first place, to all other transport workers.

All workers with pay claims in the pipeline, and all those fighting against the Tory government must organise to join hands with the rail workers against the Tory government.

Full support for the signal workers!

For a united struggle against the Tory government!

BY PETER JEFFRIES



Tuesday 5 July: Nurses, doctors and supporters march to fight closure of Guy's hospital in London

Photo: Marg Nicol

Defend political rights of trade unionists in South Africa!

COMRADE MO, a member of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa), was dismissed as an organiser for the Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union (PPWAWU), an affiliate of the COSATU union federation.

Mo was dismissed on 17 May because he campaigned for the Workers International in the recent elections in South Africa.

There has been a smear attempt saying that he used union facilities to promote his party; that he was involved in financial

corruption in the unemployed union he worked for previously; and, that he misrepresented his union mandate in COSATU structures. All these smears have been proved to be lies.

The Concerned Workers Committee against Undemocratic Practices in the Unions was established on 3 July in Cape Town to mobilise against the dismissal and similar actions in the unions.

We call on all workers, socialists and democrats, as well as progressive unions

and organisations worldwide, to support the work of the committee by:

- Sending protest faxes to COSATU HQ, for the attention of Sam Shilowa, on +2711 339 5080 or +2711 339 6940.

- Sending protest faxes to PPWAWU HQ, for the attention of Obed Zimande, on +2711 331 3750. Copies to Workers International, on +2721 475122.

- Send messages of support to the Concerned Workers Committee via the Workers International, on +2721 475122.

Don't miss out on T-shirts!

WE HAVE received one T-shirt from our comrades of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa). The T-shirt reads 'DESTROY CAPITALISM — BUILD SOCIALISM' with the symbol of the Fourth International on the front. On the back is 'WORKERS

INTERNATIONAL TO REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL'.

Now what our comrades want is for us to take a bulk order for these before they send us the T-shirts. The agreed price is £10 plus £2 for postage.

The purpose of these T-shirts is not just to get our propaganda out—it's also to raise money for building the necessary international organisation and consciousness in the working class

for it to 'destroy capitalism'!

The South African comrades stood in the provincial elections and received more than 5,000 votes. This achievement cost a considerable amount of money.

Immediately, they tell us, they need 1,100 rand, which is about £250. A further £500 would be extremely useful so they can get set up to be better able to finance their own work towards the international overthrow of capitalism.

Also, we need to think of building subscriptions to their monthly paper, 'Workers International News', here in Britain.

We thank PE/JO in London and FG in Edinburgh for their generous contributions received in the last two weeks.

So get your cheque books out and send us some desperately needed money!

Send money payable to 'Workers International', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

On other pages:

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- Save the Durham miners' 'Big Meeting', p.4&5
- World Cup '94: not just a game; History for grown-ups, p.6
- 'Scottish road' to socialism; Workers Aid reports, p.7
- Mitterrand and Rwanda, p.8

Lies about full employment

LAST week's conference called by the Trades Union Congress was supposedly about how to restore full employment in Britain. Employment Secretary David Hunt was an invited speaker, as was Howard Davies, director-general of the employers' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry. They both took up the TUC's invitation.

In the run-up to the conference Hunt pretended that the government was now committed to a policy of full employment. This was sheer hypocrisy. Hunt and the rest of the ruling class know that the days of full employment are dead and gone. The world crisis of capitalism makes it impossible to return to such a commitment.

The conference was not about full employment, but about how the Tory government can collaborate with the trade union bureaucracy to prevent any fight in the working class against unemployment and the near starvation wages on which millions in so-called 'jobs' have to try and live.

The Tory Party and the ruling class is in a deep crisis. So deep is this crisis that a section of the Cabinet now favours the renewal of formal relations with the trade union bureaucracy.

'There is a role to play for the unions to have a positive partnership with employers in the workplace,' said Hunt just before the conference.

As far as Hunt and the ruling class are concerned that role is to discipline the working class and tie it to the direct needs of the capitalist class and the state.

At the 'Big Stick' demonstration called to protest outside Congress House last Tuesday against the TUC's 'Conference on Full Employment', there was a lot of rhetoric about the betrayal of TUC general secretary John Monks and those organising the get-together with Hunt and Davies.

This by no means exhausts the issue. For the three contenders for the Labour Party leadership have each refused to give any firm commitment on the restoration of full employment.

This refusal testifies to the fact that unemployment is not simply the result of 'Tory policies', as one speaker outside Congress House suggested. A Labour government, tied hand and foot to capitalism as it will be, cannot restore full employment.

Those who say it can are either engaged in deliberately lying to the working class, or spreading dangerous illusions.

Black youth and crime

ACCORDING to the 'Guardian' (4 July), there are eight pieces of completed Home Office research whose publication has been postponed or abandoned because their findings don't support the Home Secretary's 'law and order' crackdown.

One of them is the British Home Office contribution to a study across several European countries which looked at the connection between young offenders and their ethnic origin.

The Home Office contribution found that people of Afro-Caribbean origin were less likely to be involved in crime, including drug crime, than their white counterparts.

This research is not being published in Britain at all. It is being suppressed — because it doesn't fit in with the racist prejudices of Michael Howard, the police, and the British National Party.

Letters

Why we should junk 'critical support'

JOHN ROBINSON (Letters, 25 June) asks whether Gaddafi did not deserve Trotskyists' 'critical support'. Why pose the question abstractly?

Let us discuss the very real 'critical support' given to Gaddafi in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Workers Revolutionary Party, of which John and I were, and are, members.

This involved abandonment of any attempt to formulate a revolutionary programme for the workers of Libya or any other Arab country, and of any attempt to work or discuss with Arab socialists or worker-militants.

The Libyan government gave indirect financial backing to the WRP, which printed thousands of Gaddafi's 'Green Book' in English — Libya paid — but no copies of the Fourth International's programme in Arabic.

The WRP mobilised for pro-Libyan demonstrations; 'criticism' was limited to formal reminders in our press that we didn't agree with Gaddafi about everything — and it was suspended in 1981 as a result of an agreement between [WRP secretary] G. Healy and Gaddafi's representatives, which was kept secret from party members.

No effort was made to discuss with Arab socialists, who could have begun a real criticism of Gaddafi in the name of the Arab working class.

This 'critical support' was not only capitulation to Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism. It also reflected habits of thought into which many party members fell.

The idea implicit in our 'critical support' for Libya and the Palestine Liberation Organisation was that the 'front line' of the 'struggle against imperialism' was manned by non-working-class forces like Gaddafi.

It was a tactic that increasingly became a strategy: a substitute for the strategy of working-class revolution and of building a party to guide that revolution.

The slogan of 'critical support' should be junked because it was used by Healy and Ernest Mandel, leader of the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International', to miseducate a generation of revolutionaries. People became used to thinking that the 'front line' was somewhere else.

The Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International has struggled to break from this legacy, putting forward a

working-class programme. We say: 'Let the working class fight for its own independent programme and party. If it fights alongside bourgeois nationalists, it does so under its own banner.'

This line, as against 'critical support', is the one we must develop.

Simon Pirani
London SE18

Not just bad tactics

WHETHER or not the slogans of 'critical support' and 'anti-imperialist united front' were advanced originally by Pablo (Simon Pirani, Letters, 18 June), I fully agree that they should be ditched.

They are left-sounding formulations to cover class collaboration and break down the workers' independent struggles.

I assume Pirani agrees that during the last general election — and many before — it was incorrect for the Workers Revolutionary Party to give Pabloite 'critical support' to the Labour Party?

I also agree with Pirani that 'bourgeois nationalism cannot play any progressive role'. From the time that the bourgeois nationalists took over the administration of their 'own' countries as imperialism's policemen they have become appendages of imperialism and reactionary fetters on any progressive movement.

Of course at times the master and his lackeys fall out and the master has to whip the lackey into obedience, as occurred in the Gulf and Malvinas wars.

In the interests of imperialism and their own greed for profit, the bourgeois nationalists perform their role of whipping the workers and peasants into servile obedience.

It is this reactionary force, which murders and gasses its workers and peasants to crush even the slightest murmur of revolt, that Charlie Pottins (Letters, 11 June) is proud to

'support' (not even 'critically').

Pottins declares that 'Workers Press never defended Saddam Hussein's regime against the rights of the Kurdish people or Iraqi workers' (emphasis in the original).

Can we assume from this that Workers Press defended the rights of the Kurdish and Iraqi peoples against Saddam Hussein?

Can we therefore assume that the workers and peasants, particularly those in the demoralised armed forces, were urged to assert their class independence and interests by taking advantage of their bourgeoisie's weakness, to fight for its overthrow and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' military front against both imperialism and its national bourgeoisie lackey?

Obviously not, for Pottins gives support to an abstract, classless 'Iraq' and 'Argentina', and so does not distinguish between the classes in those societies.

In practice this means support for the 'Iraq' and 'Argentina' ruling classes, just as patriots of this country refer to the defence of 'British' interests, meaning those of the capitalist class.

This is not a question of bad tactics; it is an unprincipled political position.

A. Thomas
London SE26

More than words

I CAN'T help feeling that in the discussion on 'critical support' there is a tendency to think that if only the words used by the revolutionary movement were cleared up all the problems would disappear.

This most strongly appears in the case of Simon Pirani, who gives a list of phrases that he thinks should be put in the 'dustbin of history' (Letters, 18 June).

Among these phrases is 'critical support'. Behind this seems to be the view that if you criticise something you can't

support it and if you support it you can't criticise it. I believe this reflects a real problem for the revolutionary working-class movement that can't be solved by throwing words in the lexical 'dustbin'.

Use of words obviously has an importance and it is necessary at certain points to go beyond the set phrases that often have become meaningless or distorted. For example, Lenin once criticised the use of the phrase 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' in the months running up to the October Revolution:

'The person who now speaks only of a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" is behind the times, consequently, he has in effect gone over to the petty bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle; that person should be consigned to the archive of "Bolshevik" pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of "old Bolsheviks")' (Letters on Tactics, emphasis in original).

But an archive is not a dustbin.

Christine Mitchley
London SW11

Letter from the editor

THIS week we have two letters that have been severely cut and I want to take this opportunity of explaining why. The letters in question carry on a debate that has been going on for some weeks, which was started by a letter from A. Thomas (11 June) criticising Charlie Pottins (28 May) and the WRP for not being consistent on 'critical support'. This was replied to by Pottins in the same issue.

Both Thomas and Simon Pirani (18 June) have already had letters published on this subject. Other contributors have been John Robinson (21 June), Bob Myers (28 June) and Peter Fryer ('Personal Column', 28 June).

This week's letters from A. Thomas and Simon Pirani were originally approximately 600 and 1,200 words long. Ideally, a letter should not be more than about 350 words. We need more but shorter letters in Workers Press.

One reason for this is that publishing long letters makes people think they have to write at the same length. Nothing can be further from the truth.

There is a need for a place where polemic can be carried on at length if necessary — but Workers Press is not that place. Perhaps the writers of these letters might consider producing such a publication?

Editor, Workers Press
P.S. This letter is 225 words long.



Gulf war: 'the master [had] to whip the lackey into obedience'

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MY RUSTY old German came in handy this week as I have met a Hungarian miner who is in Britain for the Durham miners' gala.

I found myself explaining to people that the comrade 'only' spoke Hungarian, German, Russian and Croatian. To every person I met with him I asked: 'Do you speak German?'

When I said 'only' what I meant was that the comrade, unfortunately for us who can only really speak English fluently, didn't know the local language.

What this reveals is the crying

need for those of us trying to build internationalism in the working-class movement to study and learn to speak other languages.

Some of the most useful are: German, French, Spanish and, possibly, Russian.

I put in the 'possibly' because many east European workers hate Russian as a symbol of the bureaucratic oppression of Stalinism.

And, yet, on top of this 1 billion people are Chinese who speak various 'tonal' languages that are very difficult for European language speakers to learn.

It is said that it takes about five years for an English speaker to learn to speak a Chinese language fluently. Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese and many other Far East languages are also tonal.

African peoples also speak a whole variety of languages, along with the languages of the various European oppressor nations.

This is a problem that English-speaking 'internationalists' in particular must overcome. In doing so it will become a powerful resource to the movement.

Mike Cooke

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Bexley lecturers defy threats

LECTURERS at Bexley college, south-east London, defied threats from the principal as they lobbied the governing body last Monday, forcing to its attention their dispute with management over the attempt to introduce new contracts for teaching staff.

Management had issued documents to the governors blaming NATFHE, the lecturers' union, for the failure over the contracts.

BY OUR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

At present lecturers teach between 17 and 21 hours a week in most colleges, depending on their grade when appointed — college managements are trying to introduce contracts with no set maximum hours,

and with no contractual safeguards. These hours do not include the preparation of lessons or marking.

About 50 lecturers were in the college foyer to meet the governors as they arrived for

their meeting. The principal turned up and declared that he refused to accept that there was a dispute and that all staff must leave the building (where they just happened to work!).

Recognised

Any member of staff who remained and was recognised (!)

would face disciplinary action, it was threatened.

Bexley NATFHE had held a meeting on Friday 1 July where members voted to declare that they were in dispute with management. This followed union advice, as the principal was refusing to negotiate and attempting to issue individual contracts. A letter was sent by the

lecturers to the principal on Friday afternoon, formally stating there was a dispute.

After the meeting, a senior member of staff began to issue threats to staff who had short-term contracts, telling them that if they did not break rank with the union and sign individual contracts their employment would be terminated.

Outside Monday's governors' meeting the principal, aided by his finance and resources director, announced that he would sue NATFHE and win because no court would agree that a dispute existed unless there had been discussions between the union and the management and unless both sides agreed that there was a dispute;

Refused

He refused to listen to any discussion — his sidekick announced: 'Listen to the principal, he has authority!' — and lurked on the stairs to see what would happen next.

A NATFHE representative suggested that if the members did not go away, the principal could always call the police and get them removed. But the prin-

cipal was reluctant to accept this advice.

The lecturers, who had remained polite — though representatives firmly told the principal that he was deliberately trying to mislead their colleagues — discussed the principal's ultimatum.

Decided

It was decided that there were a lot more serious things to do than go through a lot of procedures. The lecturers decided to send two members into the governors' meeting to explain the lecturers' case.

The general opinion of members was that the principal had been put on the defensive. 'I think we have got him on the run!', one lecturer said. 'Just wait until we tell our colleagues how he has behaved!'

A large pile of unsigned contracts was then disposed of appropriately.

■ A meeting was planned during the past week between The College Employers' Forum and NATFHE, to discuss a national pay award.

This would cut across the local negotiations.



Workers and trades unionists responded to several trades councils' call for last Tuesday's 'Big Stick' demonstration against the TUC's 'Full Employment' conference in London, at which Tory employment minister David Hunt and CBI leader Howard Davies were billed to speak (see page 2).

Coaches arrived last Monday bringing Merseyside workers to enjoy the hospitality of Camden Workers' Club.

Not surprisingly the call elicited a somewhat different response from TUC leaders. They warned officers of Camden trades council, at a meeting on Wednesday 29 June, that opposing TUC policy was breaking its rules and organisations supporting it could face discipline. The trades council officers argued vigorously and politically that Hunt and Davies had no place at a TUC meeting. Photo: Marg Nicol

Rail dispute — latest score: 4-0 to strikers

BY OUR INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE dispute between the signal men and women and the Railtrack employers, already transformed into a government versus the unions fight by the intervention of Tory ministers, escalated this week.

The RMT transport union has decided to call a series of two-day strikes from the week of 24 July, after its six one-day strikes the fourth of which happened last Wednesday.

The conciliation service ACAS has failed to break the deadlock after repeated attempts to carry forward negotiations.

The key issue remains past productivity that signal staff are insisting be taken into consideration and which they say was reflected in the original 5.7 per cent Railtrack offer. This was the offer squashed by government intervention.

The government wants to

force through a complex offer that on average would give a mere 3 per cent. Some 25 per cent of staff would actually lose between £1,000 and £2,000 a year.

Railtrack is now resorting to pressure tactics as opposed to negotiations. It is planning to write to all signal staff and their families and has set-up a so-called hotline to 'explain' the offer.

And Railtrack managers are under pressure to open the signal boxes and run them. Let's hope no such safety short cuts are planned with the lives of train workers and passengers.

The message is: Don't travel by train on Wednesdays as an act of solidarity with the signal workers and as an act of self-preservation!

The score for the RMT strikers is 4-0 against the government — and that would guarantee success in the World Cup. But then football teams don't usually face an opponent that is renowned for moving the goalposts!

In brief

Long working hours cost lives

'IF IT is not put into law, it is left for money to decide.' This was the appraisal of Peter O'Dowd, whose 12-year-old daughter was one of 13 people to die when a school minibus hit a motorway service vehicle on the hard shoulder of the M40.

He was referring to the government's refusal to legislate for the fitting of seatbelts in small buses. However, the real cause of the tragedy was stated by several witnesses at the coroner's court.

The minibus, travelling at between 60 and 70 mph, veered from the outside lane across three lanes onto the hard shoulder. Every indication was that the driver, Eleanor Fry, had fallen asleep at the wheel.

She had started her day at 6am, done a full day's teaching, and then driven 14 students to London for a concert at the Royal Albert Hall. They had to stand throughout the concert before she drove the minibus back to Bromsgrove, near Birmingham. Education authorities have now recognised that this is a dangerous, but frequent, practice. They are now preparing to use two drivers on journeys of over 100 miles.

That will not solve the problem. Bus, coach and lorry driving members of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) have pointed out that even if teachers were paid driv-

ers, they would not necessarily break regulations on driving hours by having a driving workload like Ms Fry's.

Driving-hours regulations only control time actually spent driving. A full day's teaching and standing to listen to a concert would not be counted.

Workers who earn their living driving have called for the ten-hour legal limit on driving time to cover all working time, not just driving time.

Clearly anyone who does a full day's work and then drives others in a bus or coach is seriously endangering both their own life and the lives of their passengers.

If it is left to money to decide, then many more passengers and drivers will die. Safe driving has a cost in money. Money can be saved, but the cost in life will be higher.

NAO checks into training fiddle

THE National Audit Office is conducting an inquiry into two alleged cases of fraud by Coventry-based JHP, one of Britain's biggest employment training companies.

It is alleged that the company claimed payments to which it was not entitled. The NAO will examine allegations that the National Vocational Qualification system is being abused. The inquiry is expected to last six months.

JHP was formed in 1983, and has profited greatly from the government's training schemes. It has 700 trainers and several thousand students on its books.

This inquiry comes on top of regular complaints from trades unions. A recent television inquiry exposed the fraud of training schemes that took trainees off the unemployed register but failed to give them proper training.

In some cases the training fee and the payment for funding trainees' jobs were claimed for people who did not exist.

London bus crews demand action

BUS crews in many parts of London are pressing for strike action as a result management's refusal to have meaningful talks about wage increases. In most cases these were due on 1 April.

Crews are also angry at London Transport's refusal to agree to them staying in the LT pension scheme. For some years there has been talk of strike action to defend the right to stay in the £2 billion scheme, but officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) have now become very uneasy about such talk.

Hard-pressed by angry crews, some TGWU officers

have said the union cannot afford to run the postal strike ballots now required by law.

Management plans are very clear. Within the next four weeks the names of the buyers of the ten LT companies will be known. Since the local managers hope to be able to buy their own companies, the last thing they want is to be involved in talks about wage increases.

If other parties buy the companies, they will not agree to any wage increase which they would be forced to honour under 'transfer of undertaking' regulations.

The low pay and exhausting hours now being worked by bus crews are causing staff shortages in London garages, even in those areas with 11-14 per cent unemployment. There seems to be a good chance of a return to the early 1970s when, because of low wages, there was a 30 per cent driver shortage in London and the bus service fell to pieces.

We already know what the private companies will do, as it is already happening outside London. There will be untrained and often unqualified drivers taking poorly maintained and unsafe buses on the road.

In the interests of themselves and those who use the public bus service, the TGWU crews must now begin to take action. This is just the time, when the employers are at their most confused and most open to pressure.

Roy Thomas

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Inside left

Young Marx

In 1844 the weavers of Silesia, driven by unemployment, wage cuts and hunger, stormed the homes of the wealthy merchants who exploited them. Armed troops were used to crush what the provincial president of Silesia called part of a 'universal assault of the poor against the rich'.

In the democratic paper 'Vorwarts', however, writing as 'A Silesian', Arnold Ruge said the miners had lacked a 'political soul', because the weavers had fought for their daily bread, without thought of establishing a republic. Karl Marx replied angrily: 'Confronted with the first outbreak of Silesian workers' uprising, the task of one who thinks and knows the truth consisted not in playing the role of schoolmaster in relation to this event, but instead in giving it its specific character.'

This, of course, requires some scientific insight and some love of mankind, whereas for the other it is a glib phraseology, imbricated with empty love of oneself is quite enough' ('Critical Original Notes on the Article by a Silesian', 31 July 1844).

'Love of mankind' — how that phrase would invite sneers, even derision, from some of today's proclaimed 'Marxists'!

In 1843, criticising Bruno Bauer's 'The Jewish Question', Marx distinguished between mere political emancipation — though it is a useful step — and real human, social emancipation. In his critique later in the year of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right', he declared that liberation could only be achieved by 'a class of society which is not a class of society', that is the proletariat.

The industry brought into being. In September 1843 Marx wrote that 'criticism of politics, participation in politics, and therefore real struggles' should be 'the starting point of our criticism'.

'We do not confront the world in a doctrinaire way with a new principle: Here is the truth, kneel down before it! We develop new principles for the world out of the world's principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the slogan of struggle. We merely show the world what it is really doing for ...'

South of the border

'Specialist Organiser' claimed recently that Trotsky was 'prepared to collaborate with the bourgeois state' against the Stalinists. After their 24 May 1940 machine-gun raid on his home, he fled publicly to Mexico's attorney-general to expose the Stalinist secret police's activities.

Exiled by Stalin, denied refuge by Britain's Labour government (1931), and expelled by 'democratic' Norway and France before finding sanctuary in Mexico, Trotsky could hardly reject the Mexican state's protection against Stalin's murder-machine. The Stalinists pretended the machine-gun attack was a put-up job, publicly 'owning' the leader Siqueiros, and preparing another attempt.

In 1939, Trotsky agreed to testify before the US House of Representatives Dies Committee about Stalinism, but refused to have confidential talks, provide evidence against Latin American Communist Parties, or endorse anti-Communist repression by governments and trade union bureaucrats. He was denied entry to the United States. In June 1940 he urged American Trotskyists to turn towards Communist Party workers. The founder of the Fourth International would have more cross over to anti-Communism than he could cross the Rio Grande.

Charlie Pottins

Don't let labour leaders kill off this

Save the Durham

'Big Meeting'

THE first formally recognised 'Big Meeting', which started an annual event, was staged in Wharton Park in 1871. The platform was decorated with the Thornley banner, a lodge renowned for its militant action and radical thought. It was an old centre of Chartism and was the only Durham pit village to have participated in the attempted general strike of 1839.

It had been the Thornley miners who had first gone on strike during the movement of 1869 which put an end to the hated bond system, just two years preceding this first gala and doubtless explaining the pride of place given to the lodge banner.

The following year the gala started to be held at the Durham racecourse, and by 1875 it had become so big that the North Eastern Railway withdrew all trains to Durham between Bishop Auckland, Newcastle and Lanchester, claiming that it could not cope with so many people on a Saturday.

As a result, the galas for the following two years were held on Mondays, which, given the custom of the miners in lying idle on Mondays, must have pleased the coal owners no end.

But while the first officially recognised Durham meeting took place in 1871, there had been many

This weekend sees the 110th Durham miners' gala, the 'Big Meeting' as it is traditionally known. Following the steep decline in coal mining in the north-east, its future is once again being called into question.

Yet for a century and more it has occupied a unique position in the history of not only the miners but

'Big Meetings' of miners from the neighbouring coalfields of Durham and Northumberland.

From the 1800s onwards great armies of miners would converge from the most distant villages, from coasts and hills, walking all day in many cases. Because of the vast distances travelled, banners and lodges would arrive from all directions and at all hours throughout the day.

One of the early venues of the 1830s was the Black Fell near Eighton Banks in County Durham, where an immense number of miners from the collieries of Tyne and Wear assembled to adopt certain

resolutions and consider the best way of achieving wage rises from the colliery owners.

The Durham Big Meeting has always retained its early informality, having no strict arrival times or precise routes, and with banners converging on the County hotel from never less than three directions.

Likewise, at the end of the speakers' session bands strike up and lodges march off at will, without central direction.

The temper of the gatherings has long given the state cause for alarm, from the time when the miners gathered on the moors

of the British working-class movement as a whole. Some features of that history are recalled here, the material being based on the introduction — written by Dave Douglass, National Union of Mineworkers delegate for Hatfield Main colliery, Yorkshire — to a forthcoming book on the history of the Durham gala

bringing fowling pieces and muskets in the 1800s, to a speaker on the platform in 1984, who warned the miners that 'the forces of war enemies have been arriving all the week and are camped in prisons and are stationed all around'.

The banners and slogans carried at Durham have reflected the general temper in the working class as a whole.

Miners' banners during the Chartist period carried such slogans as 'Let those who are without a sword sell their shirt and buy one', while the 1890s, in a more conciliatory mood, had slogans such as 'In the past we have been



Big meeting 1940s



Workers' tradition Durham ing'

enemies, now let us be friends'. Likewise the bitter struggles of the 1920s, taking place in the shadow of the Russian revolution, produced banners with the portraits of Marx, Lenin and Irish nationalist workers' leader James Connolly.

The banners also reflected that relationship between religion and politics that has characterised the British working class for much of its history. Thus the front of the banner would have pictures of Karl Marx or Arthur Cook — secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain at the time of the 1926 general strike — while the reverse side bore depictions of Jesus and the angels.

Durham has always been more than a political meeting. For the young and unattached it has been a place where, for the last century or so, young working-class people have flaunted the latest fashions. In the 1950s and 1960s Durham became one of the greatest assemblies of working-class men and women anywhere in the country, as well as a gathering that Labour Party leaders would miss at their peril.

* * * * *

WITH the 110th gala the last deep

mine in County Durham has been closed, bringing to an end over 600 years of mining in the county. Once again the question of the survival of the Big Meeting is at stake. There is no doubt that some trade union and Labour leaders would like to see it dead and buried.

Anything that stands in the way or threatens even slightly their collaboration with the employers and the Tory government must be

'The temper of the gatherings has long given the state cause for alarm'

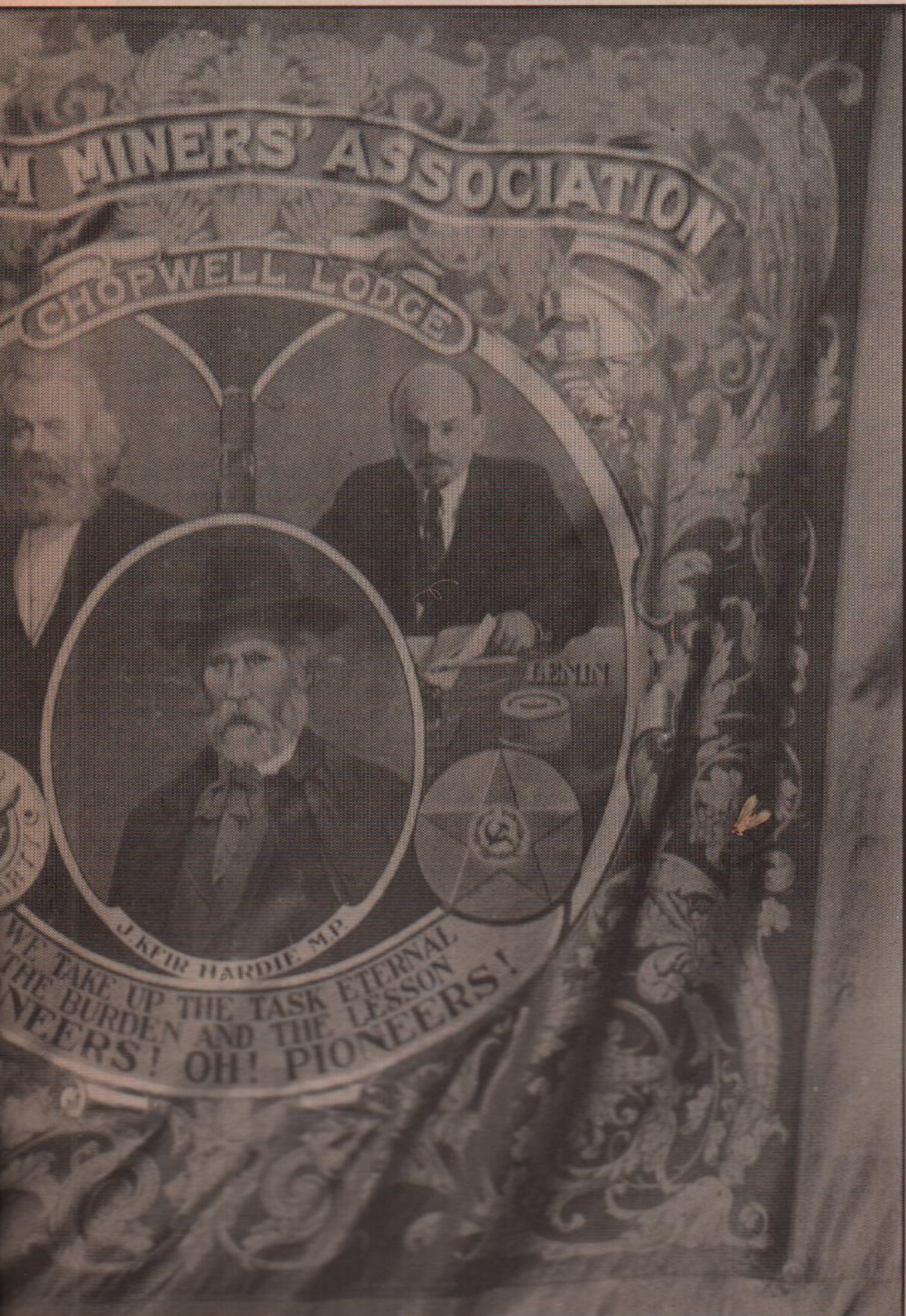
destroyed as far as they are concerned.

We cannot see the Big Meeting killed off. It represents part of the traditions of the whole working-class movement which must be assimilated and digested for those who will have to carry the struggle forward in today's conditions.

Given the will, Durham can remain what for long it was: a festival at which workers come together, a forum where they can discuss their common problems and the way to tackle them.



Big Meeting 70s



Hetton Lyons Lodge leaving for Big Meeting 1951

A collection of imperial loot

PERSONAL COLUMN

A CHEER and a half to the 'Independent' for its recent tongue-in-cheek editorial asking (30 June): 'Is it a travesty to associate seats of learning with consumer capitalism?'

On the whole not, the 'Independent' thought, pointing out that 'the only person since Jesus to give his name to colleges in both Oxford and Cambridge is the late Sir Isaac Wolfson, of Great Universal Stores fame'.

Indeed, it added, taking money from big business is a tradition that goes back to the beginnings of university education. For Oxford's Balliol College 'began in 1268' — in fact it was endowed about 1260, but who cares about accuracy? — when 'a noble offered to support a handful of students as penance for a quarrel with the Bishop of Durham'.

So, in furtherance of this ancient and remunerative tradition, Oxford's Manchester College changes its name to mark a gift from the carpet magnate Sir Philip Harris; Sir David Robinson, 'who made his money in radio rentals and then retired to devote his energies to horse-racing', has given his name to a Cambridge college; and the courtyard of the Victoria and Albert Museum is named after Pirelli, 'an Italian tyre company more often associated with exotic calendars'.

On the honouring of brand names in this way, the 'Independent' tells its readers that 'part of the British Museum's Edo art collection is displayed in a gallery named after a Japanese camera company'.

To anyone who knows what this 'Edo art collection' really is, and how it was acquired, such a way of putting things is either ill-informed or perverse, calling to mind the army officer for whom 'William Tell' was 'all about civilians shooting at fruit'.

The story was told in this column nearly four years ago ('Apologies to the Edo', 20 October 1990), but I think it bears retelling.

IN February 1897, four months before Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, a British punitive expedition took and destroyed Benin City, capital of what had been one of the biggest and longest-lived West African forest states.

The expedition seized and brought back to Britain thousands of remarkable works of art and antiquities. Some were in ivory, others cast in bronze or brass by the *cire perdue* process, in which the wax covering the model is melted out.

The booty included heads of rulers, bronze plaques of fighting-men, ivory carvings of horsemen, brass bracelets, masks, huge elephant tusks carved with intricate designs, jointed leopard figures.

These objects were the main cultural heritage of the Edo people, but were then generally attributed to European influence. The technique used was so advanced that few supposed that Africans could have developed it without Europeans to show them how.

Credit was usually given to the Portuguese, since they had been the first European nation to turn up on that part of the African coast for trading purposes.

Thus the famous archaeologist and anthropologist Lt-Gen. Augustus Pitt-Rivers of the Grenadier Guards, who gave his name to the Oxford museum that houses his collection of weapons and other useful inventions, declared in 1900: 'No doubt we cannot be wrong in attributing it to European influence, probably that of the Portuguese some time in the sixteenth century.'

Nowadays we know better. Benin art is universally acknowledged as one of the finest ex-

pressions of African culture. Robert Home, in his 'City of Blood Revisited: A new look at the Benin expedition of 1897' (Rex Collings, 1982), calls it 'a massive testimony to the existence of a long and flourishing art tradition'.

In the looted palace about 1,000 years of Benin history were represented in some 30 shrines to past rulers, most of which displayed a bronze memorial head cast after the death of the ruler (*oba*) it portrayed, as well as carved tusks depicting his achievements.

No one in the British expedition seems to have taken the trouble to catalogue any of the seized objects, nor to record their position when found. As the 'Annual Register' reveals, the British officers were more interested in pegging out a golf-course.

By no means all the looters were privates and NCOs. They included the second-in-command of the expedition, Major-General F.W.B. Landon of the Army Service Corps, who wrote to his wife from Benin City a few days after its fall: 'I have spent £8 on ivory besides two tusks that I have looted.' He was knighted in 1919.

No attempt was made to record the relative position of shrines and heads, or the names of the rulers the latter memorialised. So the heads can't be dated, save by a rough assessment of their stylistic development in relation to each other.

About 900 bronze plaques survive, containing much information on Edo customs. However, the meaning of much of this information has also been lost, because the plaques were ripped from their cultural context.

The stolen objects were seen simply as 'curios', and were at that time of small interest to all but a handful of museum curators, ethnographers, and rich antiquarians and collectors such as Pitt-Rivers, who, like the British Museum, lost no time in obtaining a choice selection.

But most of the bronzes were auctioned off by the Foreign Office, and 'discerning' German museums snapped up very many of them. Patriotic Englishmen were rather vexed by this, and in 1903 H. Ling Roth, in a book called 'Great Benin: Its Customs, Art and Horrors', summed up their feelings.

He found it 'especially annoying to Englishmen to think that such articles, which for every reason should be retained in this country, have been allowed to go abroad'.

Of course, one can't help wondering what Roth and Gus Pitt-Rivers would have said about that Japanese camera company.

But I wonder still more about the ignorance of British imperial history displayed, or affected, by the 'Independent's' leader-writer.

LET us suppose that this writer's great-grandfather's house had been burgled nearly 100 years ago, and that priceless family treasures — family photographs and genealogies and other records — had been stolen.

Suppose, further, that the loot had turned up in some British museum or other. Would members of the family be content to call it, blandly, an 'art collection'? Or would they call it by its right name: stolen property, which they would have every right to reclaim?

It's high time that Britain's loot from Benin was called by its right name — and restored to its rightful owners: the people of Nigeria.

Peter Fryer

Television

History for grown-ups

Review by Charlie Pottins

AUSTRALIAN soaps may be for dopes, but when it comes to real drama, documentary, and dramatised documentary the diggers can come up with gold.

The 1978 film 'Newsfront', reflecting the changes of the 1940s and 1950s in the lives and cameras of heroic newsreel-makers, set the tone. Frank Hardy's 'Power Without Glory' serialised some years ago, presented history for grown-ups, not safely-distanced in costume-drama, but a saga from living memory. The original novel had been near enough to the knuckle to bring a major libel action from the politician whom the cap fitted.

Focused

A documentary on the 'White Australia' policy shown a few years ago focused on the treatment of Jewish refugees and Chinese workers. Hitler and Emperor Hirohito had been defeated, but racist ideology still shaped immigration policy.

That was naturally followed last year by 'The Leaving of Liverpool', a moving drama about children shipped to Australia by British welfare agencies after World War II, exploited, ill-treated and abused by employers and Catholic priests. As an elderly neighbour

of mine remarked, 'It makes you think. If they got away with something like that, what else is there we don't know about?'

'The Leaving of Liverpool', used black-and-white newsreel of the Queen's visit to Australia, all flagwaving crowds, intercut with the embittered young man desperately trying to avenge himself on society by a hopeless gesture. I probably watched those newsreels in our local bug-hut, before going home to my Coronation mug and Korean war comics.

I remember the 1953 Petrov case on newsreel, the airport tug-of-war for the wife of a defecting Soviet diplomat. There was a bigger tug-of-war, as 'The Petrov Affair' (BBC1 22 and 23 June) reminded us, for Australia. It split the Labour Party there, and in that too, the Catholic Church, at any rate Catholic Action, had a hand. We got courtroom drama in the 1954 Royal Commission probing for evidence of red espionage. Was idealist Labour leader and former foreign minister Dr Evatt as naive as depicted?

The arrogant pommy royal commissioners should make any self-respecting Aussie a republican; but their haughty con-

tempt for the labour movement and elected leaders has a wider significance.

More brutal arrogance was depicted in 'Salvador' (BBC2, 26 June), Oliver Stone's 1986 true-life movie about journalist James Wood discovering integrity, courage and love, as he uncovers death-squads, corruption and CIA culpability in a Central American civil war. Exchanges between fellow (North) Americans were as bitter as between Salvadoreans, the murder of Archbishop Romero was handled in a way Eisenstein would admire, and the immigration cops were on hand to spoil any happy ending.

Tyranny operates at many levels. In 'The Barretts of Wimpole Street', Sidney Franklin's 1934-version (Channel 4, 30 June), the love of poets Elizabeth Barrett (Norma Shearer) and Robert Browning (Fredric March) struggled against a claustrophobic patriarchal Victorian household. Charles Laughton, as hateful Papa Barrett, brought the film to life, revealing perversity and cruelty beneath paternal affection. Reminding us why we were brought up despising Victorian hypocrisy, it also reminded me

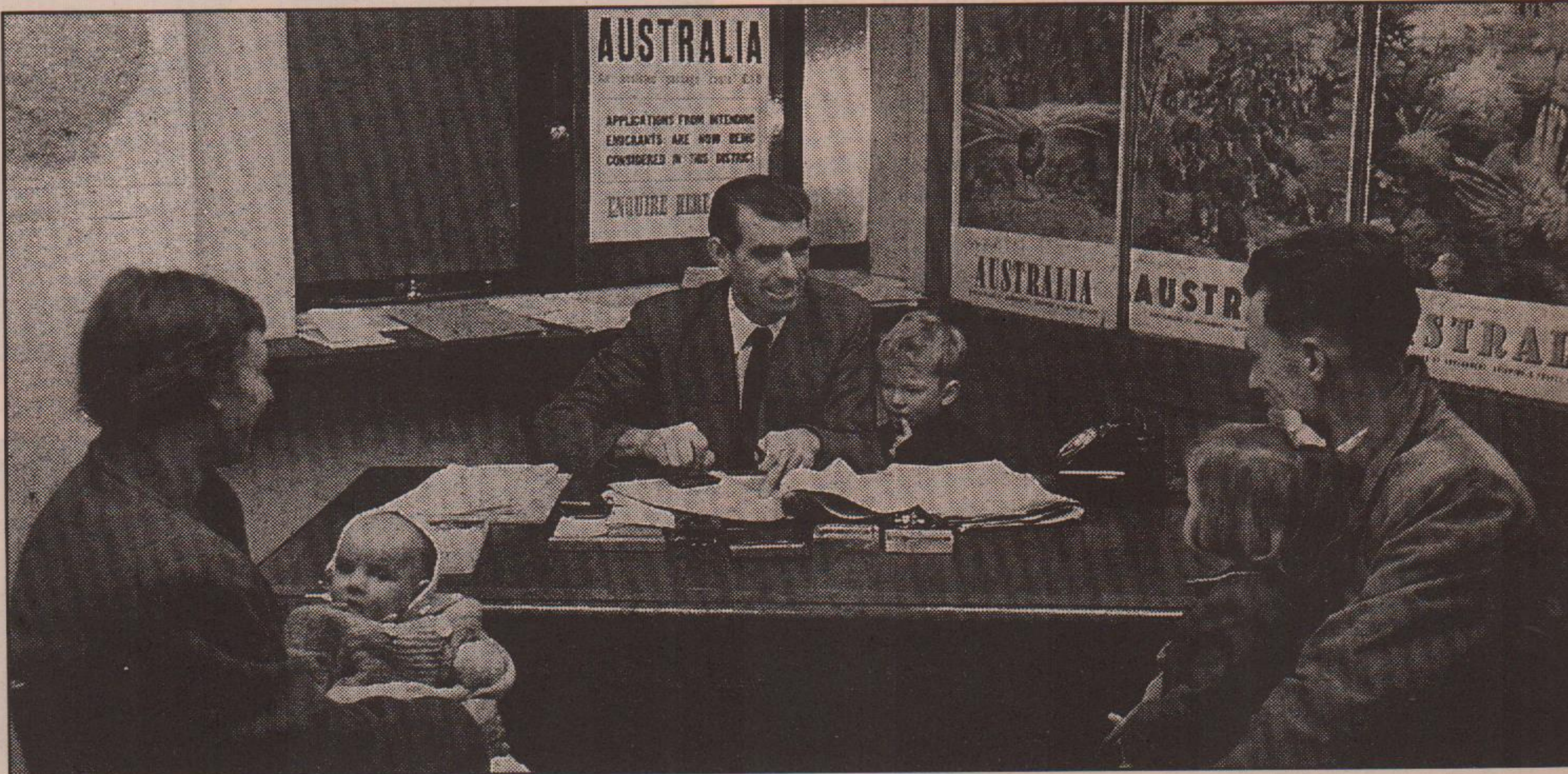
of a certain more recent political paterfamilia.

The condition of Britain after the promised return to 'Victorian values', seen obviously enough in street homelessness and child prostitution, was further revealed in 'The Cook Report Update' (ITV, 30 June). An estimated 100,000 teenagers are now into steroid abuse, which can be more damaging than heroin, Roger Cook claimed.

Wholesome

We were shown drugs being traded in the playground. LWT's 'Gladiators' (nice wholesome family viewing) was cited as an influence. Child pornography, the 'black economy' and 'busy fences' further testified to the 'enterprise culture'.

I've confessed before to enjoying Scottish Television's 'Taggart'. Mark McManus died on 6 June, aged 60, doctors said from pneumonia, friends said from a broken heart over the death of his wife. A Lanarkshire miner's son, he worked as a boxer and a docker in Australia before acting. 'Och aye, he was genuine, right enough,' conceded Marie in my local. What better compliment could an actor, or come to that, a critic, desire?



'White Australia', about that country's racist immigration policy, focused on the treatment of Jewish and Chinese refugees

World Cup: it's not just a game

BY PAUL DAY

WHAT do the following mean to you: Carlos Valderrama's hair-do; Paul McGrath's knees; and Jurgen Klinsmann's dives? If the answer is nothing whatsoever, then you are one of those people who are not watching World Cup '94.

Why is the World Cup so big? Any football match is, at its best, a celebration of athleticism and skill. At its worst it can be dull and turgid, a boring display of stifling play aimed at restricting goals. International football is all this writ large, and there have been examples of every type of game so far in this tournament, held in the US.

Scoring

The Norwegians were knocked out after showing no interest in scoring, even against an Italian side reduced to ten men; the Nigerians got through to the second round with an often suicidally attacking game; individual strikers like Hagi and Maradona have delighted the crowds with some great goals; and teams like the Irish have played with utter commitment and unity of purpose.

That, then, is the fans' view of the glorious game. But there is another side to the World Cup, which the armchair spectator can try to ignore, but which has run through this tournament like Maradona through a defence. Money, like the Argentinian at his best, is everywhere in this game.

Most fans have complained about the scheduling of games at odd times in the afternoon; Irish manager Jack Charlton has complained at games being played in the dangerous noonday heat; before the tournament began European fans complained at it's being played in a country with no major domestic league.

The simple fact is that the World Cup went to the US because of the powerful sponsorship of American-based transnationals like McDonald's, and because the American television companies had the financial power to attract the game's international managing body FIFA. (Although once there, it must be said, it seemed a very good place to hold it: the US, with its huge immigrant population, already had resident fans of most of the teams).

Games are played at midday because this suits the television companies. (Those of us watch-

ing in Britain have been irritated by seeing players waiting for a signal from FIFA before kicking off: this has been the signal that the commercial break has ended and satellite link-up has been restored).

For fans in Britain this should be no surprise: this is precisely what the creation of the Premier League did here. (Hence the number of games played on Monday nights in the presence of the television com-

'The simple fact is that the World Cup went to the US because of the powerful sponsorship of American-based transnationals like McDonald's'

panies). Ticket prices have gone up, as the managing bodies of clubs have realised that they can fleece loyal fans who want to watch their club. (For a detailed discussion of the Premier League's — aka the 'Premiership's' — money deals see 'Out of Time' by Alex Fynn and Linton Guest, published by

Simon and Schuster, £14.99).

The violent deals behind some clubs have been shocking. The Colombian side, reportedly financed by the Medellin drugs cartel, received death threats before their game against the USA. They lost 2-1, after a defensive error saw defender Andrés Escobar score an own goal, and were knocked out of the competition. After their return home Escobar was killed by gunmen chanting 'Goal! Goal!'.

Conduct

Irish fans who held a whip-round to pay Jack Charlton's £10,000 fine for ungentlemanly conduct raised almost ten times that sum. Charlton has said that he may give some of the money to Escobar's family.

Ultimately that response is what many see in football — a team game transcending international barriers with a shared set of rules and a love of the contest itself.

This romantic notion tells only half the story, though. For the game is dominated by powerful financial figures, and run for their profit.

■ 'Out of Time' is available from the Index Bookcentre, 28 Charlotte St, London W1P 1HJ.

Taking the 'Scottish road'

The question of whether Scottish socialists should support moves to independence from the so-called 'United Kingdom' has been the subject of a continuing debate within the movement, expressed in the pages of Workers Press by the discussion between James D. Young and WRP member Terry Brotherstone. Here DAVID EYRE continues this discussion

I AM glad that James D. Young returned to the debate that has been going on between himself and Terry Brotherstone on the subject of the 'Scottish road to socialism'.

In Young's letter of 12 March, Jim said that he was puzzled by Terry's use of the phrase, the 'utopian search for a "Scottish road to socialism"' ('John Fordun' column, 19 February). He even went so far as to suggest that many other Workers Press readers would share his puzzlement. I have lived in Scotland all my life and as a supporter of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, of which the WRP is the British section, I, along with many others I think, was not puzzled.

Strands

Terry's phrase accurately reflects, I believe, the thinking of what Jim called, 'the anti-unionist, republican socialist left'.

This thinking attempts to unite two strands of class struggle in Scotland; that of a large section of the bourgeoisie to claim its political identity from that of England, and the struggle of the Scottish working class. The search for theoretical justification for these beliefs has led some from this movement to go down some long and tortured paths.

In Tom Nairn's book, 'The Break-up of Britain', the claim is made that the bourgeois revolution in Britain was in some way deformed, partly because of the strong residual power of the aristocracy, leading to what he calls a 'patrician' state. Nairn claims that to effect a transition to 'democracy' a second revolution is required, the seeds of which are

to be found in bourgeois nationalism, which has become the 'gravedigger of the state'.

'The fact is', he continues, 'that the new nationalisms of the British Isles represent a detour on the way to (socialist) revolution.' Nairn goes on to criticise Marxism which he says insists that the 'essential unity of the UK must be maintained till the working classes of all Britain are ready...'

Nairn claims to be a socialist and yet has no conception of the working class as a force for itself. Instead it must go through yet another 'phase' of bourgeois democracy.

Socialist revolutionaries are presented by Nairn with the task of completing the work of the 'Glorious Revolution' of William III and his wife Mary. This nonsense is used by Nairn to justify the subordination of class struggle to the needs of bourgeois nationalism.

Compare this with the work of Glasgow socialist John Maclean. As Terry pointed out, Maclean put forward the idea that 'the political break-up of "Britain" might be a necessary part of the final demolition of the British Empire' (19 February).

Fight

Maclean was greatly influenced in this by the work of the Edinburgh socialist, James Connolly, who took the Irish Citizens Army to fight alongside bourgeois-nationalist leaders in 1916. The reasons behind this were totally different from the ideas of those such as Nairn. This was a time when the nationalist movement was gearing up for an armed struggle with the British state, independent of, but with widespread sympathy

from, the working-class movement.

It was a time when the large majority of the Irish working class was still unconvinced by the socialist argument. In these circumstances Connolly attempted to create a bridge between the nationalist fight against British imperialism and the struggle for socialism. At all times he fought for the political independence of the working-class movement from the nationalist leadership and was highly critical of them throughout this period.

As Connolly said, in 1915: 'You can raise the green flag over Dublin Castle, but if you do not change the social conditions of the Irish people you will have changed nothing.'

Connolly's strategy, and Maclean's expansion on it, was born out of the rising anti-imperialist nature of bourgeois nationalism, but at all times the ultimate goal of these two great leaders was that of socialism. In my opinion Terry is correct in saying that it is an 'idea that still has force'. It is an example of the Marxist method correctly applied that enriches the armoury of socialist revolutionaries.

Class

Can we say that the working class in Scotland is in some way more prepared to go through a struggle for socialism if that call is linked to the call for an autonomous Scotland?

Perhaps Jim will argue that the 'Scottish identity' has always remained strongest within a working class which was largely excluded from the benefits gained from the expanding British empire and thus resisted the idea of being 'British'.

Perhaps he will go on to argue that this makes it necessary for socialists to take up the question of Scottish self-determination in order to create the conditions for socialist revolution. Let us examine this question.

The implementation of the poll tax was carried out in Scotland a year before it reached other parts of Britain. There was widespread anger in the country, not only against the poll tax but also at the way in which people saw the Tories using Scotland as a guinea-pig for their policies.

In Scotland the only bourgeois political party which advocated a non-pay-

ment campaign was the Scottish National Party, and yet that party made very little political gain as a result. Jim Sillar's election as MP for Govan was the only tangible gain.

The working class in Scotland did not turn to the nationalists for leadership in spite of the complete failure of the Labour movement to form any meaningful opposition to the poll tax. Labour councillors, such as Strathclyde regional council leader Charles Gray, were at the forefront of calls for increasing the powers of the courts to track down and punish non-payers.

The working class itself organised new community-based forms outside the Labour movement and participated in a Britain-wide struggle which brought about the end of the poll tax and brought down its architect, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The issue became one of class and not national identity.

I am not convinced by the argument that socialists must take up the call for a Scottish

parliament if they are to create links with the Scottish working class. I do not think that the Timex workers were convinced when trade union leaders and Labour MPs stood up on platforms and said that the management in the factory would not have been allowed to behave in the way it did if a Scottish parliament was in place.

I certainly did not believe Scottish TUC general secretary Campbell Christie when he said that a Scottish parliament would stop the attacks on the health service. Does Jim himself believe these things of a Scottish parliament?

This is where I believe Terry is justified in using the word 'utopian'. The role of revolutionaries is to fight alongside the working class in all of its struggles and by doing so demonstrate how those struggles point towards the necessity of the socialist revolution.

Also, however, we do not fight alongside movements that do not exist, and I do not believe that the working class is striving for an independent

Scotland. To try and create such a movement in order to justify a personal political viewpoint is not a Marxist analysis, and is definitely a fruitless exercise.

In Balázs Nagy's pamphlet, 'In Defence of the Transitional Programme', there is a section devoted to the question of nationality. Although the pamphlet was written with the states of the former Soviet Union in mind, it is applicable to the Scottish question.

Nagy states that socialists should give support to all movements of the working class towards self-determination, but at all times fight for the international unity of the working class and the socialist revolution.

If such a movement is formed in Scotland then socialists must lend it their support, but while the call for a Scottish parliament is restricted to the SNP and the alliance of left-wing Labour reformists and Stalinists of the STUC in the 'Scotland United' movement, we should have no truck with it.



Demonstration calling for a Scottish parliament

Photo: Rex Dunn

April convoy returns — August campaign begins

THE campaign for international workers' solidarity against ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina is vital.

Three Workers Aid lorries returned to Britain on 30 June after a successful journey taking food parcels to the Kreka miners in Tuzla.

The miners were grateful for the food, but they said what was even more important was to know that they were not forgotten and alone.

The drivers report that despite war weariness, many people remain determined to resist the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina. People are critical of many of their political leaders.

The convoys are part of a campaign, not just to take food but to call upon the European workers' movement to take sides in this fight against fascism in ex-Yugoslavia.

Last week aid and money collection was kicked off with a successful day of action in Harwich near Bolton. Collectors were outside supermarkets and

newspaper coverage and thousands of leaflets through doors ensured that everyone knew about Workers Aid.

Local people were waiting with aid for the collecting vehicle, driven by the local milk delivery woman who organised the day, to come to different advertised pick-up points.

Local Bosnian refugees helped with the collecting, which raised £500 and large quantities of aid.

Freed

Meanwhile supporters in Newcastle, including a group of men freed from Chetnik concentration camps, were preparing to campaign for Workers Aid at the Durham miners' gala on Saturday 9 July.

This will see the beginning of a three-week campaign by a team of volunteers who will travel round the country and then across to France.

Anyone who is able to join the team please contact Workers

Brazil's socialists back Workers Aid



BRAZIL's newly formed 3,000-strong United Workers' Socialist Party (PSTU) is giving full support to Workers Aid for Bosnia, and will make the campaign part of the platform of all its candidates in future elections.

This was decided at last month's founding conference of the new party, in a resolution denouncing 'the imperialist aggression and genocidal attacks of Serbia on Bosnia, supported by the governments of eastern Europe and the ex-USSR'.

Hailing 'Bosnia's heroic resistance for self-determination', and responding to the call for workers' international solidarity by the miners of Tuzla, the PSTU conference

Publicise Workers Aid for Bosnia — a special pamphlet on Bosnia will be published;

Collect funds in the United Workers' Central Organisation (CUT) and other Brazilian trades unions, and in the student movement, to allow direct participation in the Workers Aid campaign; and

Instruct the party's representatives in the National Congress of Brazil to demand that the government breaks with the arms embargo, sends arms to the Bosnian government, and works for the immediate withdrawal of United Nations forces.

The vice-president of a Brazilian petrol workers' union is campaigning to get his union to donate a dollar per member to

JUST OUT!

'The Big Meeting'

A people's view of the Durham miners' gala.

Poems and memories by miners and their wives of the largest and oldest working-class demonstration

Foreword by Tony Benn MP and articles by Dennis Skinner MP and the late Sid Chaplin, a well-known Durham writer.

In a year when the last pit in the Great Northern coalfield has been closed, this book is an important record of the spirit and vigour of the people of the Durham pit villages.

Edited by Keith Armstrong, a North-East poet.

Published by Trade Union Printing Services in association with 'Northern Voices' and Index Books.

Printed in an A4 format, with 112 pages packed with photographs of previous Big Meetings.

Price £9.90 + £1.25 p&p, from TUPS, 30 Lime Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 2PQ.

Save the Durham gala — see pages 4&5

MITTERRAND ASKS S. AFRICA TO JOIN WAR IN RWANDA

FRENCH troops, fighting what has become a colonial war in Rwanda, may get South African backing. On his official visit to South Africa last week, 'Socialist' President Mitterrand asked for a South African contingent to provide armoured and logistical support to the French intervention force.

President Mandela said any decision on intervention ought to be taken by the United Nations, and not by one country on its own. But he agreed to lease 50 armoured personnel carriers to the international 'peacekeeping' force in Rwanda.

While Mitterrand was in South Africa and Foreign Minister Alain Juppe was due to fly to Senegal for help, French forces in Rwanda dropped their pretence of neutrality. Colonel Jacques Rosier ordered his soldiers to halt any further advance by the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which had seized the capital Kigali.

France's supposedly 'humanitarian' intervention in Rwanda was widely condemned from

the start because of the French government's record of backing and arming the regime responsible for the massacres.

Exiles

Rwandan exiles in Brussels demonstrated with placards saying 'France the arsonist, not qualified to be firefighter'.

Aid workers, including those from the French-based Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), questioned the purpose and size

of the intervention force.

Why, for instance, if it was there to stop machete-wielding death squads killing civilians, did it require Jaguar strike aircraft?

In the Cyangungu area, south-west Rwanda, French troops under Colonel Didier Thibaut allowed the government's

militia to continue roadblocks used to capture Tutsi civilians. Tutsis held at a football stadium accused the prefect, Mgambiki Emanuel, with whom Colonel Thibaut was working, of taking part in 'selections' of prisoners for execution.

RPF forces, which had taken Kigali after two days of fight-

ing, freed 2,000 Tutsis under siege in a church, and took a government-run death camp.

Decreed

The RPF said the 'exclusion zone' decreed by French forces was only a 'safe haven for the perpetrators of genocide'.

RPF secretary-general Theogene Rudasingwa said his forces had the right to go anywhere in their country, and would resist French interference.

'This confirms that the French role is not humanitarian, they are trying to save the people responsible for the atrocities,' he said.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS



Victims of the Rwandan war: the French government has a record of backing the regime that is behind the massacres

Workers Press

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BY MIKE COOKE

IN 1989, the hated Berlin wall was physically destroyed by the people who lived under the Stalinist regime in east Germany.

Days later, there were scenes of hundreds of people storming the Stasi secret police's headquarters and looking through the documents of an internal network of spies used against opponents of the government.

The Stasi was notorious around the world for its 'security' techniques. It trained, among others, the internal security regimes of the South West Africa People's Organisation in Namibia and the African National Congress in South Africa. These organisations used this training against its own members who called for greater democracy, by torturing them in detention camps.

Many believed that the hideous Stasi network was destroyed by the reunification of Germany into a bourgeois state.

But almost five years later, evidence is emerging from a police investigation that the

Stasi in effect privatised itself on the back of money raised through ransoms for about 32,000 political prisoners.

The leader of the police investigation, Manfred Kittlaus, told the 'Observer' (3 July): 'By 1989, only about 50 per cent of East German plant was still working. The Stasi, as an intelligence agency, knew better than anyone that the party was over. They realised they could no longer count on state funding. So they privatised themselves, in line with the new economic theories. Don't forget, they were also policemen. They knew where to find the criminals with whom they could do business.'

Ransom

It seems likely that from at least 1975 all east German political prisoner ransom negotiations were under the control of the Stasi, under which the price rose from 40,000 Deutschmarks (£16,300) per head to DM100,000 (£40,800).

In a huge Mafia-type operation about DM26.5 billion (£11bn) was embezzled according to Kittlaus.

The money has been 'invested' in normal criminal activities like car stealing. But money also went into 'legitimate' businesses.

Kittlaus says: 'I can take you to restaurants where there are no customers but which declare huge profits.'

Much of the money is going into new businesses with dozens of employees unaware of the source of the company's capital.

Kittlaus maintains Stasi crime is fuelling a German recovery and that 'it is necessary to examine carefully all new businesses incorporated since 1990, to check out the source of their funding.'

In west Germany the Stasi had more than 2,000 well-placed agents says Kittlaus: 'We have evidence that in the spring of 1990... vast sums of money in foreign denominations estimated at 350 million DM flowed out: some money paid into blind [anonymous] accounts, some direct to former Stasi officers. Since the Stasi were able to establish false identities in West Germany with ease, it is feasible to imagine that many West German citizens were in receipt of these funds.'

Of course, as loyal servants the investigators believe the stolen money should be put in the coffers of the bourgeois state.

In 1972, Kittlaus was responsible for a special federal investigation of the Baader-Meinhold group. But the investigation in the Stasi, 'Zerv', is being organised by the Berlin regional government. This is despite it having been set up by the German government.

Amnesty

In fact some politicians want an amnesty for all former servants of the east German state.

Two such are the Socialist Democrat presidential candidate Johannes Rau and the former leader of the Federal Democratic Party, Graf Lambsdorff. They maintain that investigation and prosecution of Stasi crime can cause only 'further alienation of the people of the East'.

Well, it could 'alienate' former Stasi agents, of which there were 180,000 in the former Stalinist state. But what about the victims of their oppression?