

SOUTH AFRICAN DOCKERS ON THE MARCH

ABOUT 200 casual dockworkers marched on South Africa's parliament on 6 September. And many of the 1,800 who work on the docks decided to stay at home.

The dockers elected their representatives: three workers, a comrade from the General Workers Aid Service and a comrade from the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa).

The demands made by the dockers were as follows:

- All jobs to be made permanent.
- Protective clothing to be provided and paid for by the bosses.
- Travel allowances for all.
- Allowances for working in or next to the sea.
- Night-shift allowance.
- Clarity on what the hourly rate is.

In the general meeting before the march, when the Workers International

comrade was introduced, a young worker rose to announce that he was a 'soldier' from the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party and demanded to know what the Workers International's position was on the SACP. We explained our position and that we were there to fight the bosses and not the SACP, but he continued to raise questions.

The workers became impatient with him and said: 'We are here as workers, not soldiers.' Another worker — the leading executive member of the committee — rose and drew a circle in the sand with his stick. He then drew five parallel lines inside. He explained that this represented the different sectors of the struggle — the community, the youth, the women, the students, and, at the head, the workers. All of the sectors work together with the community. Outside the circle are the political parties.

Updated

We are here as workers irrespective of political affiliation, he said. This is the M-plan — referring to the Operation Mayibue of 1960 but now updated by the worker himself. After the march this committee member decided to join the Workers International.

As we marched to parliament we met an old timer on his way to the docks. He said we must not sing freedom songs and not march as the ANC said on TV the previous night that these things belong to the past. Here we could see the power of TV reflected in his statement. But the workers had already

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN CAPE TOWN

left their workplace and all minds were focused on getting to parliament. We spoke to the traffic police — members of the COSATU union federation — who promptly provided an escort. While to-ing and fro-ing outside parliament, high-ranking figures were seen, although they pretended not to see us: Peter Mokaba in the latest model BMW; deputy finance minister Alec Erwin; and minister of transport Mac Maharaj.

Mac raised a clenched fist salute but then turned and hurried away. Only after a news reporter put the story on the wire did someone emerge. Minister of water affairs Kadar Asmal came: the docks are next to the sea, after all! He said he would liaise with labour minister Tito on the matter but could we stop singing and go away!

After an hour, manpower department officials arrived. Kettledas (ex-NUMSA metalworkers' union) gave us a sympathetic hearing and promised to set up a meeting urgently.

Then the riot squad arrived and threatened to arrest us — captain Wilson gave us 15 minutes to disperse as we were illegally gathered. The important lesson from the conduct of the police was learnt in practice by the workers, who remarked that the police were the same as in the old South Africa.

All eyes at the docks are eagerly awaiting the meeting with the minister of labour and the docks management.



Postal workers from all over the West Midlands demonstrated in Coventry last Saturday against the government's plans to privatise the Post Office

Photo: Mark Salmon

Brazil: where are the murderers?

This letter of protest over the assassination of Jose Luis Hernandez and Rosa Hernandez Sundermann was sent on 13 September to the Brazilian justice ministry and the governor of Sao Paulo by the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

WE ARE concerned that, after three months, the official committee of inquiry into the assassination of these two workers' leaders still has named no suspects.

Your country is becoming well-known for these atrocities. Already in the past few years 1,800 peasants have been killed. Only 18 of these cases have reached the courtroom, only six

have been condemned and none is in jail.

What happened to the murderers of Chico Mendes? Why have the killers of a number of priests gone unvanquished? Now Jose Luis Hernandez and Rosa Hernandez Sundermann are added to the growing number of fighters for justice and progress who are wiped out because they will not accept gross exploitation, intimidation and repression.

The landlords' and factory owners' private police forces in

Brazil are becoming world-famous for their brutality against the workers and peasants.

Killers

Failure to bring the killers to justice leads us to the conclusion that the state police not only protects the killers but is complicit in their crimes.

We write to support the Parallel Committee of Investigation in its demand for justice.

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Labour drops minimum wage pledge

THE labour leaders are getting ready to ditch their commitment for a minimum wage. The 'Guardian' (9 September) reports that a secret meeting between Labour leader Tony Blair, deputy leader John Prescott, shadow chancellor Gordon Brown, TUC secretary John Monks, and other prominent members of the TUC general council, was held on 25 July.

Its purpose was to stitch up a deal to drop the pledge that a future Labour government would legislate for a legal minimum wage equivalent to half average male earnings. Today that would mean a minimum wage of about £4.05 an hour.

According to the 'Guardian's' report, Blair wants the level reduced to £3 or £3.50 an hour.

A Labour Party conference of eight years ago adopted this policy by a two-thirds majority, which according to the party's constitution, should mean that this item is included in the party's next general election manifesto.

When challenged about the 24 July meeting, Prescott — the 'left' candidate in the recent leadership contest — denied that the issue had been raised. But he admitted that the level at which the minimum wage would be fixed by a future Labour government was 'under consideration'.

Monks agreed that the meeting had been held and that the issue of the minimum wage had been discussed. Other participants, suffering from general amnesia, seemed to have forgotten about the meeting.

* * * * *

MILLIONS of people are of course struggling to survive on levels of income far below £4.05 an hour. They include the unemployed, pensioners, those obliged to try and survive on welfare benefits. They include those thousands of others, many of them women, who have been forced to work for below-subsistence wages — in shops, cafes, pubs and other part-time and casual forms of employment.

These workers are largely without trade union representation. The trade union leadership, pursuing something called 'business trade unionism', has turned its back completely on such people.

Blair, already paid at the level of a Cabinet minister, as an MP has just received an above-the-cost-of-living wage increase. He has the arrogance to tell people that they must survive on gross earnings that at best would be £140 a week, and at worst £120 a week, for a 40 hour week.

* * * * *

SPEAKING on BBC radio, Clare Short, considered by some a 'left' Labour MP, had the following to say about the minimum wage:

'It's openly known by anyone who knows the party well that we are looking at whether we can afford that formula immediately. Everybody wants that level, but things have deteriorated so much we have to look at whether we can realistically promise to bring it in immediately at a £4.05 level, and that review is taking place.'

How nice! 'Things' — she means the capitalist system — have 'deteriorated' so 'we' (she means the capitalist class) cannot afford to pay you £4.05 an hour.

What about the millions who have seen their standard of life 'deteriorate' sharply over the last decade and more? These are the people who most certainly cannot 'afford' to live properly under existing conditions.

What Short expresses is the fact that the Labour and trade union leaders are tied completely to the capitalist order. The next Labour government will not be one that governs in the interests of the working class.

It will be a government that will carry out whatever measures against the working class and poor people big business and the City demand of it.

This is what lies behind the abandonment of Labour's pledge on the minimum wage.

Letters

The scream of the helpless

THE Algerian Community in Britain (ACB) has received a letter from Algerian asylum-seekers who are detained in HMP Haslar. These inmates have announced their determination to go on hunger strike starting Thursday 8 September. The ACB would like to inform all concerned organisations about the letter and solicit their humanitarian help to end the hunger strike.

ACB executive committee
London

WE the Algerians here in Haslar prison are going on a non-stop hunger strike as from Thursday 8 September.

We have seen and noticed that any nationals seeking asylum here in the UK have been granted asylum or the processing of their cases has gone through faster — without being locked up — than those of ours, the Algerians. We are being locked up and forgotten for long periods of time, and in the long run we get deported back to the troubles we are running away from, and we know what happens to those who have been deported to Algeria.

We have acknowledged sev-

eral organisations over here in the UK and abroad, and we will make sure that we will keep them informed of any further decision on the outcome of our hunger strike.

The UK immigration authorities will be held responsible for anything that may happen to us during our hunger strike — sickness, bodily harm or, probably, worse than that.

Copies of this letter have been sent to the organisations which will listen and look to us with humanity and also understand the situation that we are suffering from, and which is getting worse and worse every day, and the feeling of helplessness and sadness which tells us that there is no prospect from any horizon or quarter.

May God be with every shattered soul.

HMP Haslar hunger strikers:

HA 0850, ER 3544, HA 0824, HA 0879, HA 0876, HA 0849, HA 0839, HA 0879, HA 0790.

Reality and fantasy

AS THE debate on the 'Scottish road to socialism' continues, so James D. Young's utopian beliefs manifest themselves more clearly. In his last contribution,

'Socialism in Scotland?' (20 August), they are strikingly evident.

'Certainly, the militant trades unionists who I know in Falkirk would not respond to calls for a world revolution everywhere at exactly the same moment,' he writes.

Very interesting. Does Young believe that the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International wishes to create the world socialist revolution by decree? Does he honestly think that we have looked in our Lett's Diary for Socialists and found a suitable date for the transfer of power to soviets worldwide? Or is he, as seems more likely, merely setting up a false argument for the pleasure of knocking it down in print?

By ignoring the real questions put to him and creating his own fantasy ones, Young mirrors his refusal to deal with the real role of the Scottish working class. In his eyes it has become the key to the international socialist revolution; the struggle for socialism in Scotland becomes a 'pre-condition for world socialism'.

Has Young mentioned this to the militant trades unionists of Falkirk? I am sure they would be interested to hear that the fate of the international working class is in their hands.

But, of course, '[i]t is extremely

difficult to study and write about the "international working class"'. It may very well be difficult — especially for those who are obsessed with one particular section of it — but it is also vitally important.

In a world where the labour of an individual worker is inextricably mingled with that of countless others, the only way to expose the fundamental basis of capitalism — its exploitation — is to talk about the international working class.

The 'Scottish worker' is a mere abstraction in this regard; it is only through basing our analysis from there being a struggle between capitalists and workers as *unified entities on a global scale* that socialism ceases to be a utopian dream. Young seems to have lost this basic principle of Marxism somewhere along the way. Perhaps at a meeting of the Falkirk branch of Scotland United.

Of course there remains the possibility that these comments arise out of my being, like Terry Brotherstone, 'a chauvinist for a greater England'! Perhaps if I mention the fact that I am a speaker of Scottish Gaelic and a former student of Scottish literature I can kick that crutch from under Young's argument.

Sinthad, a bhalaich!

David Eyre
Glasgow

Jobless to march through London

TODAY (17 September) sees the start of an unemployed march around London starting in Lambeth. There will be a core team of 15 unemployed on the protest, but it is expected that hundreds of trades unionists and unemployed people will join them on the way. The programme of the march is as follows:

Saturday 17 September: Lambeth/Southwark — 1pm, launch at Lambeth town hall; 5pm, rally Guy's hospital; 7.30pm, social at the Walmer Castle pub, Peckham Road.

Sunday 18 September: Southwark — 10am, rally East Street market.

Monday 19 September: Southwark/Lewisham — 10am, set off from Southwark town hall; 7.30pm, public meeting, Limes Grove Labour Club.

Tuesday 20 September: Lewisham/Greenwich/Newham/Tower Hamlets — 10am, set off Lewisham town hall; 12pm, public meeting on anti-racism, General Gordon Place,

Woolwich; 2pm, rally, Newham town hall; 7.30pm, public meeting, jobs, not racism, and social, Old Town Hall, Cable Street, Tower Hamlets.

Wednesday 21 September: Tower Hamlets/Hackney/Waltham Forest — 10am, set off Cable Street; 12pm, rally, Hackney town hall.

Thursday 22 September: Waltham Forest/Haringey/Islington/Camden — 10am, set off Waltham Forest Civic Centre; 6pm, public meeting and social, University of North London, Prince of Wales Road, Camden.

Friday 23 September: Camden/Brent/Harrow — 10am, set off Camden town hall; 12pm, public meeting, L. Constantine Centre, Dudden Hill Lane, Brent; 3.30pm, rally, Harrow shopping centre; 7pm, public meeting and social, Harrow Labour Halls, Byron Road, Wealdstone.

Saturday 24 September: Harrow/Hillingdon — 10am, rally, Harrow shopping cen-

tre; 2pm, rally, Uxbridge shopping centre; 5pm, mayor's reception; 7pm, social, both at Uxbridge Civic Centre.

Monday 26 September: Hillingdon/Ealing/Hammersmith — 10am, send off Uxbridge civic centre; 12pm, reception/antics rally, Ealing town hall; 8pm, public meeting and social, Hammersmith town hall.

Tuesday 27 September: Merton/Croydon — 12pm, public meeting, Labour Halls, The Broadway, Wimbledon; 5pm, rally, Croydon Town Hall (Queen's Garden); 7pm, public meeting and social, Ruskin House, Coombe Road, Croydon.

Wednesday 28 September: Croydon/Lambeth — 12pm, rally, Vauxhall site, Lambeth College, Belmore Street; 5pm, rally, Lambeth Town Hall, followed by social in evening.

Thursday 29 September: Final rally — 7.30pm, Central Hall, Westminster, Storey's Gate, London SW1 (opposite parliament).

Let them know in Workers Press

WITH so many activists in the trade union and labour movement reading Workers Press each week, if you have an advert for your meeting, your new book or pamphlet, or your shop or stall, or if you have something you want to sell or want to buy, then advertise it in Workers Press.

Since our readers trust what they read in Workers Press, they must be able to trust the adverts — they must be honest and truthful and Workers Press will be first in line to expose any skulduggery in this regard.

Workers Press must be the best and cheapest place to advertise in the working-class movement.

All copy to be typed (2 copies) and must be in the editorial office by first post Monday morning — with the payment for the advert made payable to 'Workers Press'.

Advertising rates: £2 per column inch, £5 per 3 column inches, £25 for eighth page display ad, £60 half page display ad, £120 full page display ad.

Copy to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Circulation department

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

In so far for September: £837.65

WE'VE not received any letters starting: 'YES, I want to be one of the 35 people who are going to save Workers Press from extinction . . .'

If you remember, last week, I put it to readers of the paper that our financial problems need 35 people to come forward with £10 a week, and what that meant. I wasn't asking people who can't afford to help but I was asking people in work to give it every consideration.

While Workers Press is produced in Britain, it is far more than a 'British' paper. OUR comrades in the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa) are in increasing contact with us and send us material for Workers Press that reflects their involvement in the growing workers' movement against the bourgeois African National Congress/National Party government of Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk.

Through our work in understanding the collapse of Stalinism since the Berlin wall fell in 1989, especially through our work in Workers Aid for Bosnia, we have re-established contact and made important links with a number of organisations in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking workers' and Trotskyist movement (see pages 4&5).

And, in eastern Europe itself, we work through the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, Workers Aid for Bosnia and the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign to rebuild the working-class consciousness that took a severe beating from the Stalinist bureaucracy.

What about Britain?

This is often the cry when I'm campaigning on anti-racist demonstrations for Workers Aid for Bosnia. Our comrades have taken a leading role in the anti-pit closures movement, the anti-racist movement, particularly around the Isle of Dogs, and are now taking part in building sup-

port for the signal workers.

Through work in the Community and Union Action Campaign and its paper 'Unitel', we seek to find ways of unifying the working class so that we can move forward together against cuts, unemployment, criminal injustice legislation, etc. In this campaign we have raised the objective necessity for the working class to build its own, new party to give this political expression.

For an organisation that's constantly scrabbling around for every last penny we're doing very well. But, just think what we could do if we had what we consider we really need to go forward.

Help us up to better work. Give the '35' a kick-off. If there's an encouraging response I might even draw up some sort of certificate you can frame and put on your wall!

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Mike Cooke

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FIGHT IS ON FOR NEXT WORKERS AID CONVOYS

ONLY a fantastic battle to raise £10,000 in under a month had made the last Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy to the miners' town of Tuzla possible, the Workers Aid treasurer reported to its last national steering committee meeting earlier this month.

The meeting launched the fight to raise the finance needed for the next convoys. Lorries will leave Britain on 4 October and again on 17 December. In between they will travel from Lille in France where a local committee, met by Workers Aid last year, is collecting equip-

BY BOB MYERS
ment for Tuzla's schools.

More than 40 campaigners from all over Britain attended the meeting in Manchester to hear reports of the August convoy and to plan out future work.

The treasurer also pointed out that many of the people who gave money and food aid to the convoys were also concerned about the situation in Rwanda but felt unable to do anything.

The campaign for international solidarity with Bosnia

must begin to build the kind of movement that can reach out to the suffering people of Rwanda, he said.

The days spent in Bosnia clearly had a great effect on convoy members new to the campaign. Many agreed to take responsibility for developing the work in different areas:

■ A Croydon teacher will use the newly completed Workers Aid video, made in a Tuzla school, and letters from Tuzla schoolchildren, to spread the appeal for solidarity into schools here in Britain. In the video the Tuzla children explain

their desperate need for books and pens, as well as their passionate desire to keep their multi-ethnic society alive. (Copies of the video can be obtained from Workers Aid.)

Co-ordinate

■ A student from Brighton will co-ordinate the campaign work in the universities and will take a year out from studies in order to work full-time for Workers Aid.

■ A nurse, also from Brighton, who had meetings with hospital and clinic workers in

Tuzla, will try to organise the collection of the medical supplies urgently needed.

Several other young people who went on the convoy have been busy collecting food and money for the next convoy.

The formal meeting gave way to more informal discussions with an evening of eating, drinking and music — courtesy of Bosnian refugee Sead's accordion and barbecue.

Most of the people who attended the meeting stayed overnight in Manchester and went for a picnic the following day, a stupid thing to try and do in

Manchester — it rained!

Nevertheless, the weekend saw a real coming together of many Workers Aid supporters — drivers, collectors and refugees — and was a step forward in the campaign's work.

On the Wednesday following the meeting, a team of convoy drivers and refugees went to Blackpool to hand out a letter to delegates at the TUC conference.

If you want to help in the many collections that are taking place across the country for the next Workers Aid convoys, ring Workers Aid on 071-582 5462.



Workers Aid in the Balkans: convoy trucks in Tuzla, north-east Bosnia; children in Tuzla; destroyed house in Croatia

Denounce slander of Workers Aid

This joint statement has been issued by the LIT (International Workers League) and Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International on a campaign of slander launched against Workers Aid for Bosnia. The statement was agreed at a meeting in Sao Paulo

WE-CALL upon all organisations in the working-class movement to repudiate the violent attack by the Workers League of the United States against Workers Aid for Bosnia.

This attack is based on police methods reminiscent of the worst forms of Stalinist slander. The aim of the attack is to expose Workers Aid convoys, taking desperately-needed aid to Bosnia, to attack by Serbian

forces. The claim by the Workers League that Workers Aid for Bosnia is in the pay of international arms dealers has no foundation and this is why not a shred of evidence has been produced in its support.

Literally thousands of workers, including students and young workers, have given their support to Workers Aid for Bosnia. Many trades unions have also supported its aims. The attack by the Workers League is an attack against every single one of these workers and every single one of these organisations.

Behind these attacks stands a definite political position. Like the Stalinists, the Workers League defends Serbia and its fascist-type attempt to destroy Bosnia and its multi-ethnic community.

We call on every working-class body to join us in denouncing these methods.

Support groups taking off for the signallers

DEREK ENGLAND, RMT executive member, spoke to Workers Press about the signals' strike

NO TALKS with Railtrack are scheduled. The strikes go on. At the TUC the trades unions gave a lead, calling on the whole movement to give financial support to keep our strike going. Their stand also encouraged all workers to give us moral support so that we don't feel so alone.

The support groups are taking off all over the place. We are receiving letters and money, and requests for speakers from trade union branches, trades councils and local Labour Parties. In some places members of these groups have offered us the

use of vans so that we can run around the outlying signal boxes to see which managers consider themselves competent to do our job.

The Health and Safety Executive has given numerous oral and two written warnings to Railtrack about their obligation to maintain safety on strike days.

Hide

The inquiry into last week's derailment is going on behind closed doors. Normally when there is an accident the inquiry is conducted on the following day and results in an interim report. It is clear that on this derailment they have got something to hide and they are probably working on ways to massage or whitewash any evidence that comes out of the inquiry.

News briefs

Blindness danger after test charges

THE Tory government has denied that the introduction of fees for eye testing is leading to an increase in eye disease that can make people blind.

Medical researchers have shown that referrals to hospital for the disease glaucoma have plunged a fifth in the Bristol area since free eye testing was scrapped in 1989.

High street opticians are the most skilled in detecting early signs of the potentially blinding disease and referring the patient for treatment.

Doctors in the hospital where the research was conducted warned: 'If this local reduction in the rate of glaucoma referrals reflects a sustained nationwide phenomenon, an increased incidence of preventable blindness can be anticipated.'

Utility chiefs' top pay

LATEST reports from the country's 29 utility companies show some remarkable salaries for their top executives. The utilities comprise British Gas, British Telecom, the ten regional water companies and 17 electricity supply or generating companies.

Looking at the pay of the top 44 executives, of the 20 who received pay rises, the largest went to Sir Desmond Pitcher, new boss of North West Water, who saw his salary rise by 44 per cent to a modest £338,000. Highest paid was BT chief Sir Iain Vallance who grossed £663,000.

While gas, water and electricity bosses were being paid these huge sums, latest figures show that BT is aiming to cut its payroll from 241,000 in 1984 to 10,000 by the end of the decade.

The electricity companies, sold off in 1990, will have got rid of at least 54,000 workers over

the same period and British Gas, which moved into the private sector in 1986, is due to reduce its workforce by 44,200. The water industry, de-nationalised in 1989, is expected to lose 6,700 jobs by the year 2000.

Landed wealth

A recent survey carried out by the 'Guardian' shows that most of Britain's land is owned by the same sort of aristocrat who owned the land in 1875 when the government published an official list.

The Duke of Buccleuch leads the present list with 277,000 acres; his ancestor was second on the 1875 list with 459,000 acres. The biggest landowner in 1875 was the Duke of Sutherland; today the Countess of Sutherland is ranked sixth. Both the Earl of Seafield and the Duke of Atholl appear on the two lists.

The top ten landowners are

among the 1 per cent of the adult population estimated to own more than 50 per cent of the land.

Pensioners easy targets

IN 1980 the Tories scrapped the link between the retirement pension and the change in the level of earnings. Since then pensions have been tied to the government's official cost of living index, which many believe seriously under-estimates the true cost of living for elderly people.

Had the old basis remained and pensions been still tied to changes in average earnings, the single pensioner would today be £19.11 better off with a pension of £76.71, instead of the actual £57.60.

A married couple are £30.66 worse off, with a pension of £92.10 instead of the £122.76 they would have had under the old arrangements.

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Inside left

Trust trash

SEVERAL years ago, two doctors investigating racial discrimination at a big London teaching hospital discovered black applicants, and those with 'foreign'-sounding names, were being kept off short-lists for interview.

A friend who was a senior administrator at another hospital told me: 'They all discriminate. It's not that at your place they were stupid enough to put it on computer where it got found out.'

Now, according to Dr Sam Everon, Indian students are a third as likely to gain a place at medical school. They struggle to get an interview once qualified, and are five times less likely to land a top consultant's job. Dr Peter Fisher of the NHS Consultants Association says that when it comes to redundancies Jewish doctors are 12 times more likely than others to get the sack.

There was racism in the health service before, but the Tory government's NHS trusts have made it worse. It goes with the creeping authoritarianism they have introduced. At a south-east region TUC health services committee meeting I recently heard that health workers are increasingly frightened to campaign against closures or cuts, fearing they would lose their jobs if they opened their mouths.

Dr Helen Zaitlin, who successfully fought unfair dismissal from a addit hospital, heard opponents remark that she had been 'bailed out by the Jewish sisterhood'. NHS trusts have bred an environment in which non-conformists are considered a threat,' Dr Zaitlin says. 'In this environment, some people are paving way to all forms of prejudice.'

Historic feet

HOPE 81-year-old Rosa Parks is recovering from the attack she received from a robber who broke into her Detroit home. And that her assailant begs forgiveness from the black people of America.

Maybe people don't remember her name. In 1955 Mrs Parks, an ordinary woman going home from work, sat down on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. She was told to stand at the back of the bus, because the seat was reserved for whites. Rosa refused.

'My feet hurt,' she explained later. This led to the Montgomery bus boycott against racial segregation, opening battle of the big black civil rights movement which swept the US, drawing world attention, and making some gains. Things could never be the same again.

When you hear Martin Luther King 'having a dream' on old news-casts, or Malcolm X's slogan 'By any means necessary', just remember the importance of Rosa Parks and her feet!

Beyond his Ken

THE 'Guardian' never has a kind word for Trotskyists. But on 6 September it carried a eulogy for the late Gerry Healy, in the shape of Labour MP Ken Livingstone's review of a book about him.

The Workers Revolutionary Party expelled Healy in 1985. 'I have little doubt that the security services played a key role in the split in the WRP in 1985,' asserts Livingstone, offering no evidence.

He continues: 'I knew immediately what lay behind the lurid tales about Healy...'

The 'lurid tales' happened to be lies. I'd known some of the complex 'behind them' since we were in the Young Socialists together. Like Livingstone, who never met Healy until 1982, they knew what they were talking about.

Charlie Pottins

Brazilian party supports Bosnia

BRAZIL's newly-formed United Workers' Socialist Party (Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado, PSTU), is giving extensive coverage to Workers Aid for Bosnia in its weekly newspaper.

Three recent issues of the 'Jornal do PSTU' have carried detailed reports in its section of international news on the activities of Workers Aid.

On 1 September the paper reported the detention of convoy helpers for 20 hours by

the Croat HVO militia, and added that the PSTU was already working to make sure that the solidarity of the Brazilian workers would be represented in future convoys.

In the following issue there was a careful analysis of the campaign in Europe, drawing special attention to trade union support, unsuccessful Stalinist attempts to hamper the efforts of Workers Aid, and various fund-raising activities.

The PSTU's national leadership has

published a background pamphlet called 'A People Asks for Help', which quotes from the resolution of the PSTU's founding congress last June: 'The struggle of the Bosnian people is our struggle too. It is a struggle against exploitation and national oppression.'

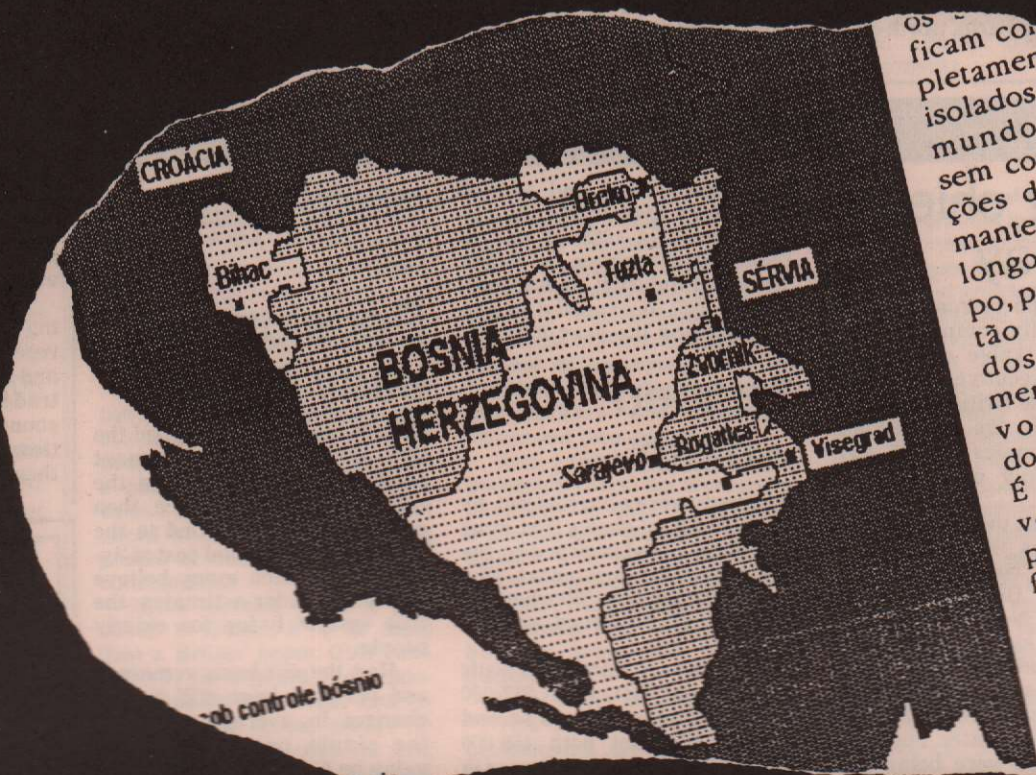
The Brazilian socialists also emphasise that their solidarity will not be limited to letters of support, but will be 'a fighting solidarity'.

Jornal da
PSTU



Ajuda à Bósnia é forte na Inglaterra

COMITÊ É APOIADO POR SINDICATOS E REÚNE CERCA DE 400 PESSOAS



os ficam completamente isolados do mundo e sem condições de se manter por longo tempo, pois estão cercados e a mercê das vontades dos sérvios. É impossível uma paz desta forma.

João Carlos Agostini

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CONGRESO DE FUNDACION DEL PSTU

Bosnia: politically and militarily betrayed

MIKE COOKE reviews 'Bosna!', a film that has appeared at the Edinburgh Film Festival (Workers Press, 27 August) and at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London

FOR me Bernard-Henri Levy's 'Bosna!' is the most powerful film I have seen on the war in Bosnia.

This is because its impact is not based on piling atrocity on atrocity — which are without number — but on the constant political and military betrayal, going back to the 1930s, of people fighting fascism.

Parallels with the Spanish civil war are drawn on throughout the film, including one particularly striking piece where almost identical images are shown: the flight by Spanish Republicans into the Pyrenees, alongside pictures of a Bosnian aid convoy consisting of people on foot traipsing through the snow; and pictures from both wars of old women walking along the road.

Of course the similarity, on reflection, is deceptive. The flight into the Pyrenees marked the tragic defeat of the Spanish republic, while the aid convoy was a sign near the beginning of their struggle of the determination of the Bosnian people to survive.

Not all the parallels come from Spain.

Haile Selassie speaking to the League of Nations — accompanied by boos — after Mussolini annexed Abyssinia in 1936. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic speaking to the United Nations asking for the arms embargo to be lifted.

What some may view as a weakness — Levy's belief that the West should intervene militarily — is in fact a strength. Levy shows incomprehension at French President Francois Mitterrand seemingly giving support to Bosnia and making a visit to Izetbegovic in Sarajevo, and yet then saying he cannot intervene. Mitterrand's version

'There is an icy laughter in the Chetniks' voices as they talk of who they are going to kill: "No, not the factories, we want to use them"; "Let the convoy through, get the ants."

and that of Izetbegovic on what was discussed in Sarajevo are certainly at variance. The hopes of the people there, expressed in demonstrations thanking Mitterrand for his visit, were cruelly dashed.

Levy struggles to understand why the West does not forcibly intervene in Bosnia and at least comes part way to the understanding that such action would only be performed if it served the West's own interests.

Levy interviews many of the key figures involved, including Mitterrand. He points out that the West views the region as intrinsically unstable and wants a strong power there to police it. Levy thinks, in the period where Bosnia was wanting help rather than concentrating on fighting back, that the West was looking to the Serbs as a 'strong hand' to police the region and make it stable.

Near the beginning of the war

who came forward from the criminal underworld to fight the Serb Chetnik aggressors. Later there was a move to make the Bosnian army more organised and so these unruly fighters were removed from the struggle. But the translation for the subtitles is often confused and none more so than at this point; much is 'lost' from the French. It talks of one of the fighters being 'liquidated' in Belgium near Liege! What this means, God only knows. Levy admits to a romantic regard for these young men who had come forward to lead the struggle for a free Bosnia.

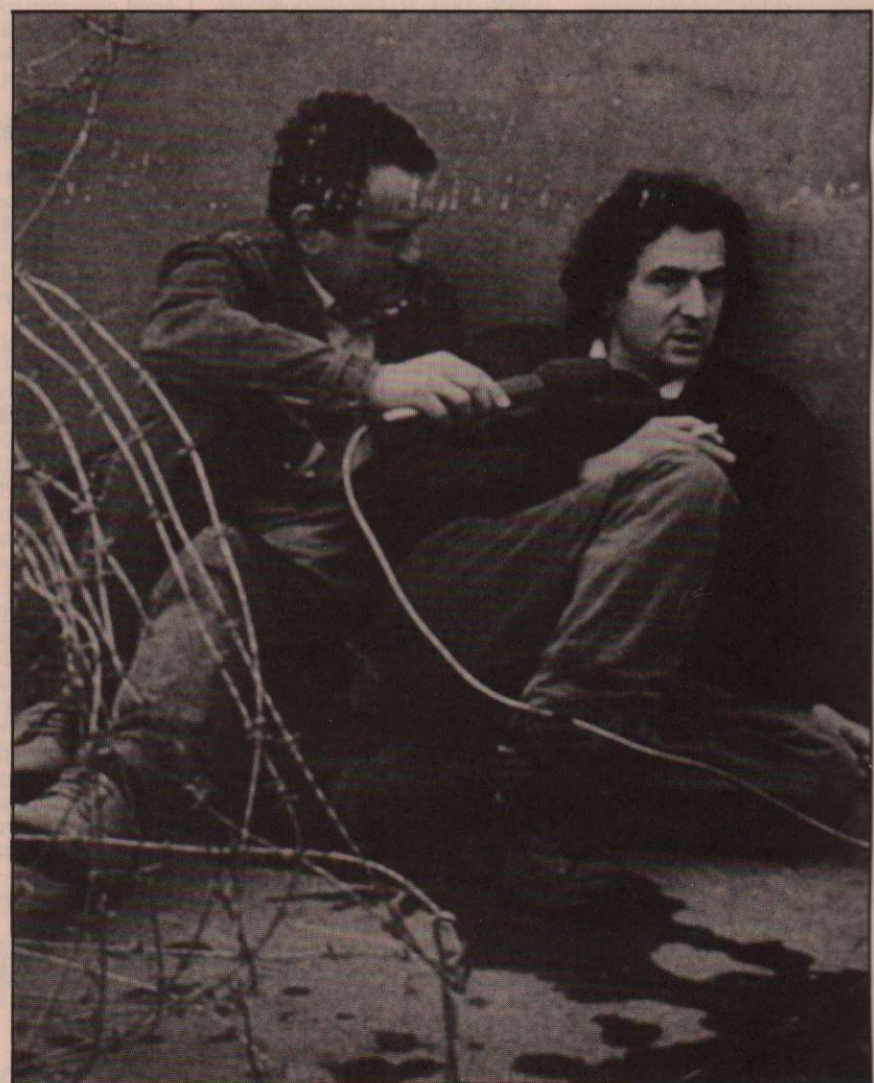
A few years ago Levy made a television series on the French intellectuals and he chronicled their 'descent' from Stalinism and Maoism into petty-bourgeois despair (my terms, not his). Certainly my impression was that he was a partaker in this despair and had been

trying the grave of a Serbian hero they also respect: Princip, the assassin of arch-duke Ferdinand in 1914!

Levy describes the filthy nationalist views of someone — I didn't catch his name — who died just before the war broke out and is in some sense the inspiration of the Chetniks, and, like Karadzic, was a psychiatrist.

Especially chilling are the snatches from the Bosnian Serbs' field radios as General Mladic discusses targets with the artillery crews. There is an icy laughter in the Chetniks' voices as they talk of who they are going to kill: 'No, not the factories, we want to use them'; 'Let the convoy through, get the ants.'

The ants were refugees following a convoy in the hope that it would offer them some protection from these cold-blooded killers.



Levy (right) in Sarajevo

involved in the Maoist movement. Either this was a mistaken impression or Levy has changed.

Levy expresses extreme anger at the barbarians from the countryside who have destroyed the national library in Sarajevo; and he draws the natural parallel with the Nazis' burning of the books in May 1933. He denounces the view in the West that this is a mere hiccup in the 'new world order' expressed in US writer Fukuyama's phrase: 'The end of history'.

No trace here of a Maoist worship of the peasantry. He talks of the peasants' rage against culture. He films people who cannot comprehend how Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic can order the shelling of his own home and psychiatric clinic in Sarajevo. These Bosnian people also describe how they wouldn't dream of des-

One trace, perhaps, that Levy has not come to terms fully with his political past is his avoidance of the role of Stalinism, now in its collapse. In the 1930s Stalinism used the Spanish civil war to settle political scores and physically liquidate its opponents, rather than forge the unity necessary to defend free Republican Spain against Franco's fascist aggressors.

But this was a film he clearly struggled to make and it should be seen by everyone who is fighting in different ways for a multi-ethnic Bosnia free from extreme-nationalist aggression.

'Bosna!' is directed by Bernard-Henri Levy and Allain Ferrari, with commentary by Bernard-Henri Levy, English subtitles. It was shown 2-8 September at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.

Debt-collector's perks

MY ELDER daughter has just taken her BA degree after a year's Access course followed by three years at North London University. Like many recent graduates, she now owes the state a lot of money.

Though jobless and practically penniless, she is being hounded for swingeing repayments by the Student Loans Company, as are many of her contemporaries.

No one, during her four years of dedicated study, ever slipped her free tickets for a pop concert or cricket match, or a bottle of expensive scent, or a Marks & Spencer gift voucher, or a box of cigars, or a bottle of whisky, or took her to lunch in an expensive hotel, or gave her and her family the use of a chauffeur-driven car.

But those and similar perks, it appears, have been enjoyed in abundance by the top officials of the Glasgow-based Student Loans Company and by some of their minions. An investigation by the Department of Education revealing this has been leaked to a Labour MP.

High-level attempts have been made to suppress the scandal, on the ground that to publicise it would be to destroy confidence in the Student Loans Company and all its works. The Department of Education dossier, including a report by internal auditors, was not shown to the Commons public accounts committee last year.

But now the cat is out of the bag. Auditors have reopened inquiries; one senior manager has been sacked for incompetence; but the main beneficiary is still at his post.

He is the company's chief executive, Ron Harrison, who is due to retire next year and whose pension has just been increased by a handsome 17.5 per cent.

In just two months in 1992, this fearless chaser of hard-up graduates spent £350 on spirits for his boardroom. The petty-cash bill for whisky came to £252.

Debt-collector supremo Harrison took his wife and secretary to lunch at an expensive Loch Lomond hotel in a chauffeur-driven car, and charged the whole junket to the Student Loans Company.

But there is more. Harrison took on his son Barry as an employee of the company, and the younger Harrison went one better than his dad by using company staff to help him move house.

Moreover Harrison senior let his company-employed chauffeur, who already owned two cars, borrow a Sierra estate car owned by the company to take his family on holiday.

The inquiry has discovered that £82.80 of taxpayers' money was spent on tickets for a Dire Straits concert, £30 on scent for Japanese visitors, £110 on gifts of Marks & Spencer vouchers, £61.80 on cigars. 'Entertainment' at a cricket match cost £470.

The internal auditors, in their report, said they had found no evidence of corruption. Struggling graduates, harassed by Harrison's bulldogs, will rub their eyes in astonishment.

Corruption is in the very air we breathe. MPs have given themselves a 4.7 per cent rise, plus generous expenses; Barclays Bank director David Band has been given a 174 per cent rise; the chairman of Thames Water has had a rise of 621 per cent; the royals and their 'grace-and-favour' hangers-on are doing very nicely, thank you; entertainment and housing allowances paid to the 77 top army officers total £5,000,000 a year; nearly £400,000 was spent on refurbishing Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson's house, including £33,000 for curtains and £12,000 for carpets. . . .

By current standards, to be sure, Harrison and his company are pretty small fry. But students and graduates should ask

PERSONAL COLUMN

themselves what sort of society it is that hands this freebie-grabbing gang a whip to flay the impecunious.

Livingstone's bad faith

REVIEWING a book whose foreword you've written, without acknowledging that fact in the review, is more than literary bad manners (though it is surely that).

Enabling a reviewer eager to plug a book to have two bites at the cherry is a form of deceit. It shows bad faith.

This, and several other aspects of Ken Livingstone's recent 'Guardian' review of 'Gerry Healy: A Revolutionary Life', were very properly dealt with in letters to the 'Guardian' last Saturday from Geoff Barr, John Lister, and John Spencer.

There is little for me to add, except that I worked closely with Healy virtually every day for almost two and a half years, whereas Livingstone's acquaintance with him seems to have been comparatively limited.

Those reading Livingstone and the blatant hagiography he has contrived to double-puff will gain a more balanced picture of Healy by reading the book mentioned by my colleague Charlie Pottins in his column last week: Harry Ratner's autobiography, 'Reluctant Revolutionary' (Socialist Platform, £5.95).

(Since this isn't a review of 'Reluctant Revolutionary' I'm not obliged to add that I wrote the introduction to it; but in the circumstances perhaps I'd better own up.)

Here in Harry Ratner's book is the Healy of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s: neither saint nor demon, but already showing signs of the grave personal and political weaknesses that would lead to his expulsion from the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1985.

Livingstone persists in his *idée fixe* that MI5 engineered this ousting of Healy, but nine years later still hasn't come up with any evidence. He just repeats his assertion, obviously hoping that some of the mud he flings will stick.

Labour's Scissor Man

READERS will recall the Gerald Scarfe cartoon of Labour misleader Tony Blair which adorned this column on 3 September.

The day it was published I was walking along London's Portobello Road, browsing among the second-hand books offered for sale there, when, for the first time in 40-odd years, my eye fell on a copy of Heinrich Hoffmann's 'Struwwelpeter' ('Shock-headed Peter'), that immortal and disturbing children's book first published in 1847.

I realised immediately that I had made a silly mistake by relying on memory and saying Scarfe's drawing had made Labour's 'Little Boy Blue' look rather like Struwwelpeter.

On the contrary, it is the sinister Scissor Man who seems to have been the model for the sketch.

And this, when you think about it, makes a lot more sense. Blair and his clique have ruthlessly scissored out of Labour's programme everything to do with socialist policies and socialist principles, everything to do with support for workers under attack, everything to do with resistance to anti-trade-union laws.

Peter Fryer

Revolutionary genius

Opera review by Hilary Horrocks

leased from hell, blinded by the light — it is hard to imagine how this could be staged more movingly.

Leonore's husband's imprisonment is mirrored by her own, which is less tangible but painful: she is imprisoned by her male disguise and her jailer's uniform keeps her apart from the prisoners (clearly, in this production, political), who stop talking among themselves when she appears.

When she sings of her longing for freedom for them both, a dawn forest scene (straight out of a German Romantic painting) opens out behind her to reflect her aspirations.

The idyllic landscapes are all backdrops, one-dimensional and unattainable. The present grim reality is three-dimensional, in bright boxes, but hemmed in on all sides by darkness.

Even at the end of the opera when the amnesty is declared, the chorus of prisoners singing the praises of freedom and brave women is suddenly dwarfed by a backdrop of massive high-rise buildings. It seems to suggest that life outside the jail is also incarceration of a different kind.

The obvious political message of the opera, at a time when the absolutist monarchies of Europe were on the defensive

against the democratic republican ideals born with the French Revolution and carried throughout Europe by Napoleon, caused it to fall foul of the government censor. The premiere of the first version in 1805 in Vienna was held up while the reactionaries tried to have it banned.

It was considered controversial because it showed corruption in a government official, because it depicted prisoners heroically, and — perhaps most offensive of all at the time — its chief protagonist was a woman, without whom the hero cannot be saved. A visiting English doctor who saw one of the ill-attended Vienna performances (the city was occupied by Napoleon's army and only French officers dared venture out to the theatre at night) described 'Fidelio' as 'a mixture of low manners and romantic situations'.

The music which Beethoven began to write at the turn of the 19th century, with its uncompromising technical complexity, its discordance and adventurous changes of tempi, was often considered bizarre by contemporaries. A reviewer commented after the first private performance of the 'Eroica' symphony: 'Very often . . . it seems to lose its way in complete disorder.'

The violinist whom the composer asked to supply fingering for his string quartets protested that he surely did not consider these works to be music. (Beethoven replied loftily, with what must be one of the all-time great put-downs: 'Oh, but they are not for you, but for a later age.')

Thrilling

His music is still so thrilling today because it expresses the revolutionary turmoil of Europe at the time — as well as his own private torment. His complete lack of regard for conventional decorum in musical composition sets him apart from some one like Mozart, only 16 years his senior. Mozart has an intuitive sympathy with the underclass and with the spirit of reform, as expressed most famously in his 'Marriage of Figaro' — but he still operates aesthetically within the framework of aristocratic culture whereas Beethoven struggled to formulate a musical language equivalent to the new developments in society.

This new production of 'Fidelio' — directed by Tim Albery and impressively designed by Stewart Laing — is now in Scottish Opera's repertoire and will be playing in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Newcastle this winter. If you are anywhere in the vicinity, don't miss it.



Rocco the jailer (Stafford Dean) is horrified at the murderous plans of prison governor Don Pizarro (Matthew Best) in Scottish Opera's 'Fidelio'

Photo: Sean Hudson

Burston school rebellion

Rally commemorates 'longest strike on record'

BY PAUL HENDERSON

FARMWORKERS, teachers and other trades unionists rallied in the tiny village of Burston, near Diss, Norfolk, last weekend for the annual rally commemorating what is claimed to be the longest strike in recorded history.

This year was the 80th anniversary of the Burston school 'rebellion', which began in 1914, and lasted through to 1939. The struggle started when Annie and Tom Higdon, head teacher and assistant teacher at the village school, organised local farmworkers to vote their own representatives on to the parish council.

The rector and the farmers lost their seats — something unprecedented.

Trumped-up charges were brought, accusing Annie Higdon of slapping a child, a charge even the child denied. The Higdons were sacked. The children then went on strike!

An alternative school was set up on the village green in Burston, with the Higdons as teachers. In spite of the magistrates summoning and fining parents whose children failed to attend the 'proper' school, people

supported their children and the Higdons.

Demonstrations and rallies in the village aroused support from the labour movement around the country, and the strike held firm. The strike school continued for a while in a disused carpenter's shop, and when the lease on this ran out, workers raised funds to buy land and build their own school. The Higdons carried on teaching there until shortly before Annie Higdon died in 1939.

The school and the commemorative rallies remain as a reminder of Burston's courageous stand against the tyranny of the farmers and the clergy.

On Sunday there were banners from the agricultural workers' union, trades councils, and other unions, local Labour Parties and the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. People came from all over the region to demonstrate and set up their stalls.

After speakers from the agricultural workers' union, there was Doug McAvoyn of the National Union of Teachers, and Gavin Strang, shadow minister for Agriculture. Much of what they had to say was familiar. After polite applause people started drifting away towards the end of the speeches, possibly with a good idea of what these leaders would do if confronted by a 'Burston situation' today.



Burston strike school

South African truck drivers strike back

SOME insights into the feelings of drivers that led to the partly successful truck strikes at Mooi River last month in South Africa were given by articles that appeared in two South African papers: the 'Weekly Mail & Guardian' (26 August-1 September) and the 'Sunday Times' (28 August).

The Mooi River blockaders came from across racial lines — black, white, Indian and 'coloured'.

'We have the same grievances,' said 44-year-old Dave Martin who has been a driver for ten years. 'Colour is not an issue.'

Martin described what the life of a trucker is like in South Africa: 'I'm not married. I can't find a girlfriend. I'm treated like a filthy, stinking truck driver.'

And Jabu Mofulu gave a similar story to the 'Sunday Times': 'Look at the way we are living — we are working men and we have to live like animals.'

The action caught the TGWU transport workers' union — to which most of the drivers belong — by surprise.

'We are disappointed with the union,' said 48-year-old Ahmed Khan. 'They have not done anything for us.'

He was looking to the Turning Wheels International Union: 'We think they will be more successful. They are an international union and they are only for drivers. The TGWU is for other people in the industry, so they ignore us.'

The Mooi River blockade ended when labour minister Tito Mboweni intervened.

Johan van der Walt, negotiator for the Motor Transport Owners Association, was full of praise for Mboweni's role: 'The important thing was that Mr Mboweni had credibility with

the workers. Without him there was no chance of even finding demands that we could negotiate. At least we have agreed to go on talking while the trucks keep rolling.'

Many workers apparently got the impression that these negotiations had won them wage rises of R500 and more.

'They must be dreaming — we haven't agreed to anything,' said one of six negotiators for the employers.

'It is only an agreement in principle to increase wages — all that has happened is that we will talk to them again.'

According to the 'Sunday Times' this was said as the negotiators 'dined in silver service splendour, warmed by a blazing log fire, at Granny Mouse Country Hotel near Balgowan'.

Block

The South African papers try to give an impression of workers' demands being incoherent. The 'Sunday Times' describes the scene at one road block: '[D]rivers stood with their arms folded and laughed as police tried to find a leader who could undo the growing jam.'

But the same articles show that the drivers all had a very good idea of what the problems were.

'The problem is simple,' said self-employed Henk de Kock of Pretoria. 'Drivers working for a boss have to live on the road to make any kind of living.'

'To make between R4,000 and R5,000 a month they have to do at least 25,000km. At 80km/h that means 12 hours a day on the road. The operators can make R60,000 to R80,000 a month out of a truck — 10 per cent of that would be fair.'

This driver was allowed through the blockade with his

load given that he was working for himself.

Dave Martin contrasted the responsibilities of the bosses with his own: 'I carry greater responsibilities than the managing director of my company. I transport highly flammable chemicals. If I make one mistake on the road there could be an accident and a major disaster. Yet no one takes this into account.'

And Khan complained about lack of facilities: 'In towns across the country, heavy vehicles are not allowed to stop over and on the roads there are very few sleeping points. Between Durban and Johannesburg, there are only five points — in Villiers, Warden, Balmoral, UltraCity and Tugela. They take only 10 to 15 trucks each.'

'Now where must the rest of us sleep? On the side of the road, only to get robbed? The government must provide us with facilities.'

Vusi Khumalo, a 48-year-old driver who has been working at the job for four years and earns more than the basic salary of many (R250 a week), said: 'My company pays a basic of R400 a week and with overtime we end up with about R3,000 a month before deductions. The problem is that when we go to the bank for a loan to buy a car or a house, they look at our basic salary — and that rules us out for any loan.'

'Another problem is that when we are on leave or when we are sick, we only get our basic — and it is difficult to survive on that. So we keep pushing overtime. The government needs to set a minimum basic wage for all drivers.'

Khumalo also complained about the R60 annual travel permit: 'Our employers do not pay it for us. The government needs to scrap it.'



Black truck driver cooking on the road at recent blockade of Mooi River that won some demands

IRA ceasefire disarms Irish working class

'RECOGNISING the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic peace process and to underline our definitive commitment to its success the leadership of Oglagh na h'Eireann have decided to that of midnight, Wednesday 31 August, there will be a complete cessation of military operations.'

With this statement the IRA declared an end to its 25 year armed campaign.

What potential? Where and how did it arise?

In 1985, the rapid developments of the world capitalist crisis had created conditions under which British imperialism found itself no longer able to rely on the Orange state alone in the north of Ireland.

By virtue of their apparent independence from Britain, the Irish republic's national bourgeoisie offered a better vehicle for controlling a dangerously rebellious Republican working class.

The resulting Anglo-Irish agreement was vital. It represented the merging of interests between the two, far from equal, national bourgeoisies driven by mortal fear of the working class.

Efforts

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams was correct when he commented that 'the agreement, from a British perspective, has been an unmitigated success' and that the prime objective of the agreement was 'the intensified collaboration and a harmonisation of the efforts being made to repress the Republican opposition to the British presence'. This analysis only demonstrates

PETER ANDERSON and JOHN STEELE comment on the IRA ceasefire

more sharply the feebleness of Sinn Fein's programme when faced with the combined resolve of the British and Irish governments.

The Anglo-Irish agreement, particularly with the involvement of the Fianna Fail and Labour coalition, brought to the forefront severe contradictions within the Republican movement and undermined working-class resistance by engendering, with Adams's help, a mood of compromise within the movement.

The next step was the joint declaration by the British and Irish governments holding out the promise of involving Sinn Fein in the political talks about the north of Ireland's future — if the violence ended.

The hook was baited and the combined pressure of the British, Irish and US governments — relayed through the nationalist SDLP leader John Hume — was brought to bear. Adams saw in this his cherished pan-nationalist front and the bait was taken.

The fact that almost one-third of the IRA opposed the ceasefire meant that the statement had to be carefully worded. Hence the term 'complete' as opposed to 'permanent'.

Adams had to reassure the Republican base that the armed struggle was not being entirely ditched.

But these same forces will require evidence that the unarmed strategy can pay visible dividends as Adams so strenuously claims. If not, the euphoria that greeted the ceasefire in Republican areas could turn to anger.

But what of the loyalists? The Anglo-Irish agreement had forced Unionism into open confrontation with the

British state. Fundamentally the Unionists, whether by strident confrontation or nod-and-wink diplomacy, were unable to influence or change events.

The present divisions among the Unionist parties are symptomatic of their inability to deal with the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The professional middle classes denied access to political power withdrew to their commercial citadels.

Fearful

The working class, lacking the same degree of insulation and fearful of the economic and political future, were susceptible to the idea that fire must be met with fire.

The result — increasing loyalist violence from the UFF and UVF.

But the Anglo-Irish agreement required consolidation between imperialism and the total Irish bourgeoisie.

The Unionists were to be coaxed and pressured into participation.

The UVF and UFF do not operate in a vacuum. If there is a widespread willingness among the Protestant community to 'wait and see' then they will reflect this.

There is no doubt that considerable pressure is being brought to bear on them to declare their own ceasefire.

There are too many unknown factors involved to be able to declare with certainty what will happen.

But one thing is clear, the talks process is the pathway to the false peace of class compromise and presents mortal dangers for the entire Irish working class.

Peter Anderson

ONE of the jokes currently doing the rounds in Belfast is that the Sinn Fein headquarters, Connolly House, has been renamed Collins House after the IRA leader who led the betrayal of the Republican fight in 1922 and signed the treaty accepting the partition of Ireland.

But if the historical comparisons are correct the reality is not a joke. The IRA ceasefire and the promotion by Sinn Fein that Ireland will be united through diplomatic talks with the representatives of imperialism and Ulster Unionism is a betrayal on a par with 1922 and an insult to the thousands of Republicans who have suffered at the hands of British imperialism.

In 1969, British troops were sent to the streets of Belfast and Derry to attempt to ensure that the nationalist rebellion over Civil Rights did not develop into an armed uprising.

In the 25 years since then the full weight and oppression of the British state machine has been used to murder, imprison and terrorise all those who resisted this armed occupation.

But the nationalist working class — and particularly the youth — remained undefeated. It has been the dominance of the politics of Republicanism, with its separation of the armed struggle from a mass movement with a revolutionary programme, that has ensured Britain's rule.

Now Gerry Adams is preparing to deliver this working class to the mercy of negotiations with this same British state and those Irish politicians who supported its butchery.

Adams believes that imperialism will negotiate with goodwill and honest

ty. He reduces the Irish struggle to a game where everyone will accept the rules.

Thus he happily agrees to a joint statement with the Dublin premier, Albert Reynolds, and John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party: 'We are at the beginning of a new era in which we are all totally and absolutely committed to democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems.'

Not one concession of note has been won in return for the ceasefire. At one time Republican policy talked of a military victory — 'One Last Push', then this was changed to a demand for British troops to be withdrawn from the six-counties. This was then altered to a withdrawal to barracks.

None of these changes of policy were ever explained to the Republican supporters. Now Adams admits ('Guardian', 10 September) that he has engineered the ceasefire without any requirement of a statement of intent to withdraw.

The Sinn Fein leadership's faith in a negotiated settlement flows from the class nature of their politics — a belief that there can be a liberal democracy in the north of Ireland in which the Unionists will be peacefully persuaded to agree to all-Ireland structures.

But it is precisely because imperialism needs a broken and divided Irish working class stripped of all its gains that it will continue to maintain the forces of state repression, its army and its laws.

The disarming of the IRA is an attempt to ensure that the working class has no recourse to weapons in the new stage that has opened up.

John Steele

Children and trades unionists targeted in Guatemala

STREET children and trades unionists are being targeted by police and gunmen in Guatemala, the Central American state that has long been the fief of big US fruit companies.

On 7 September 1994, Victor Alex, 16, and Sergio Chavez, known to pals as 'El Chupado', entered a large market in Guatemala City.

The two were apparently spotted trying to steal some sunglasses by two men who ran after them.

Eyewitnesses say one of the men, a uniformed member of the municipal police, grabbed Sergio Chavez, put a gun to his head and fired it instantly, 'blowing his brains out'.

Sergio Chavez was taken to the San Juan de Dios hospital where he died about one hour later.

Following the shooting, Victor Alex was briefly detained by the police who reportedly took him inside a room and threatened that the same thing would happen to him if said anything about what happened.

On 24 August, 500 riot police forcibly evicted peasants who were occupying the Hacienda San Juan del Horizonte, in the province of Coatepeque, Quetzaltenango department.

Peasants had been in a labour dispute with their employers at the Hacienda and decided to occupy to press for respect of workers' rights guaranteed in the constitution. They were also pressing for normal disputes procedures, as reportedly recommended by the labour minister.

Dispute

Despite their attempt at peaceful resolution of the dispute, riot police opened fire on those occupying the Hacienda.

Efrain Recinos Gomez, a member of the UNSITRAGUA, Labour Union of Guatemalan Workers, who had been bringing food to the occupiers, and Basilio Guzman Juarez, a peasant working at the Hacienda San Juan del Horizonte, were killed. Several others were wounded, two of them seriously.

Those detained by the police were subsequently conditionally released.

Shortly afterwards, however, the tortured body of Diego Orozco, a trade union leader from the Hacienda San Juan del Horizonte, was found 60 km away.

On 31 August, Rene Cabrera Estrada, finance secretary of STECSA, Union of Workers at the Central Bottling Company, a trade union affiliated to UNSITRAGUA, took part in a demon-

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

stration in Guatemala City called to protest the actions of the police at the Hacienda.

Moments afterwards, as he left for home, he was attacked by two unknown men who stabbed him repeatedly. He is now in a critical condition in hospital.

UNSITRAGUA believes the attack was politically motivated, as he was not robbed and because two men on a motorcycle followed the ambulance taking him to hospital.

Unidentified

It has also been reported that unidentified men have been asking for Rene Cabrera Estrada in hospital and medical centres in Guatemala City.

Trades unionists, peasants, student leaders, journalists and others in Guatemala have long been targets for harassment, threats, torture, 'disappearances' and murder.

A human rights accord was signed on 29 March 1994 in Mexico City, by representatives of the Guatemalan Government and the armed opposition coalition, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity.

The agreement was supposed to lead to a final accord bringing an end to conflict. Despite the accord, trades unionists and others, including children, continue to be targeted by the security forces.

The URNG has said it will withdraw from negotiations unless the government complies with conditions, including the protection of trades unionists and community workers.

TRADES UNIONISTS and others are urged to protest to the Guatemalan government at the torture and murder of trades unionists and street children. Send faxes to President Rameiro de Leon Carpio, President de la Republica Guatemala, Palacio Nacional, Guatemala.

In Britain protest to His Excellency Senor Edmundo Nanne, Embassy of Guatemala, 13 Fawcett St, London SW10 9HN. Fax: 071-376 5708.

Solidarity messages to UNSITRAGUA, 11 Calle 8-14, Of.34, Tercer Nivel, Zona 1, Guatemala City, GUATEMALA.



Protesters against a 500 per cent increase in water and electricity rates in Reiger Park, near Johannesburg. More than 20 people were injured when police fired rubber bullets and teargas into the 1,000-strong crowd demanding no increase

South African strike wave: challenge to the workers

From NELSON LANGA
in Durban, South Africa

THE strike in South Africa's hospitals has ended, despite much dissatisfaction among strikers, especially about their union NEHAWU, which sided openly with management.

The strike began at Durban's King Edward hospital and spread to other small hospitals in Natal — Kokstad, Scottburg, Matatielle and Ngwelezane hospitals.

According to the strikers, their grievances were simple. They wanted to be paid R500 which was already paid to other hospitals outside Natal. Secondly, they wanted the Natal health administration to dismiss nine members of management allegedly involved in corruption.

Health Minister Zwele Mkhize refused to take action against the alleged corruption and the workers had no alternative but strike action. The strike crippled health services in the province for two weeks.

The Natal provincial administration went to court to seek an interdict to lock out the workers from hospital premises. The terms of the interdict were such that on 1 September

workers were given an ultimatum to go back to work or face dismissal the next day.

The hospital workers defied the ultimatum and withstood management pressure to suspend the strike. According to one worker, the strikers decided to form what they called a central workers forum to lead the action because they felt the union has sold out the workers.

In some confrontations with union leaders, workers accused representatives of NEHAWU and the union federation COSATU of accepting bribes from management. They also accused the NEHAWU of becoming a 'sweetheart union'.

Replied

Strikers replied to union and management accusations that hospital workers were ignoring the needs of sick people by saying that they didn't bother with workers' grievances.

It is reported that in one meeting between strikers and Mkhize one worker questioned the fat salaries of ministers in the government of national unity while workers get starvation wages.

The minister's answer was

that if workers felt so strong about what ministers are getting they should overthrow the government!

The minister also accused workers of being misled by anarchists.

We, the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa), fully support the stand of the striking hospital workers.

We also fully support the formation of the central workers forum which led the striking workers. That forum needs to be strengthened and extended to other hospitals and also to other factories or to form what we call workers' councils.

This is the only way workers can defend themselves from the management and trade union bureaucracies when they are on strike.

Now is the time for workers to stand together against the methods of the Stalinist bureaucracy in COSATU and to demand that COSATU break its links with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party.

It is clear now to every worker that the trade union bureaucracy is acting as a brake on workers' struggles.

More and more the trade union bureaucracy acts as a police force of workers' strug-

gles on behalf of the capitalists.

Now is the time for workers to take the struggle upon themselves. The trade union leadership is only interested in using the trades unions as the springboard to getting positions in the new government.

What happened is not isolated to the hospital workers' union. There is a concerted campaign among all COSATU affiliates to water down workers' struggles in the interests of the capitalist class.

A strike of 25,000 motor assembly workers was suspended after trade and industry minister Trevor Manuel moved to slash tariffs on imported vehicles.

That move was designed to allow the employers to import cheap cars from abroad with the aim of breaking the strike.

The same has happened in the textile industry.

All workers must ask themselves how it comes about that COSATU continues in an alliance with a government that has gone all out to oppress the workers.

Was this what the workers voted for?

Now is the time to break this alliance and for the workers to form their own independent revolutionary party.

Masses protest Basque extradition

TENS OF THOUSANDS of Uruguayan workers came out on strike last month in support of three Basque people against their extradition to Spain.

The three Basques had been on hunger strike for ten days, refusing food and water, when the Uruguay government put them at the disposal of the Spanish state on Friday 19 August.

The following two days saw people gathering outside Filtro hospital, where the Basques were being kept, to demand that they be given political asylum and not extradited.

On Monday 22 August, the university was paralysed as lecturers began an indefinite strike. Other trades unionists also took action and 5,000 marched in support of the Basques.

A general strike, mobilising tens of thousands, was called the following day by the PIT-CNT union federation in solidarity with the Basques.

PIT called off the strike the next day, but at the same time, at the hospital, the police moved the Basques after four hours of physical confrontation with demonstrators involving brutal state repression.

When news got out that this resulted in two deaths and tens of injuries, popular anger forced the PIT to call a new general strike to demand the resignation of the minister of the interior on 25 September.

Support for the strike was solid and 30,000 people marched at the funeral of Fernando Morroni (24) and Alejandro Fonto (18). Two radio stations were closed by the state.

The government expelled one Basque activist, Agurzane Iriondo, on Saturday 27 September.

But disenchantment with the state continues. This was demonstrated by the rejection of a constitutional reform package backed by the principal political leaders in Uruguay in a referendum on Sunday 28 September.

Brazil car workers strike

THE main unions in Brazil's vehicle industry went on strike last week for an immediate pay rise. This is the first major blow against the wage freeze introduced under the government so-called 'anti-inflation' plan.

Production in all factories in the Sao Paulo region was badly hit, with union leaders reporting that half their 150,000 workers were on strike. Autolatina, the country's biggest car maker and a joint venture with Ford and Volkswagen, said that production had 'almost totally stopped'.

A shop steward at one of the country's giant plants at St Bernardo said that the workers had done everything to avert strike 'but the government kept interfering'.

The car makers' association Anfavea, said that if the strike lasted more than a few days sales would be seriously disrupted because stocks were almost non-existent.

Unions are calling for wages to be raised monthly to make up for losses through price rises. Such monthly increases were common before 1 July when the country's new currency (the Real) was introduced. The new finance minister, Ciro Gomes decreed that wages can only be raised once a year.

Gomes was appointed after his predecessor was forced to resign when he was accidentally recorded in a TV studio bragging that the government would use its power to manipulate the election result.

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