

Massive protests against union laws and cuts

AUSSIE WORKERS STORM PARLIAMENT

ANGRY demonstrators stormed Australia's parliament last week in protest against the government's proposals for draconian anti-union laws and severe cut-backs in welfare spending.

More than 25,000 people marched in Canberra in one of the largest political demonstrations the country's capital has ever seen.

Prominent among those who broke into the parliament building and faced 300 baton-wielding police were representatives of the Aboriginal people who will be

BY GEOFF PILLING

among the hardest hit by the government budget cutbacks. Students, angry at further charges for higher education, also joined trade unionists in the protest.

There were also sizeable demonstrations in Adelaide and Brisbane, though these were largely peaceful. Hundreds of Aborigines took part in both these events.

In Canberra, clashes with the police continued as Aboriginal groups, protesting against an 11 per cent cut in their funding and the slashing of programmes to help the unemployed, burned the Aus-

tralian flag and attempted to enter the parliament building for the second day running.

The first attack on parliament appears to have started after police grabbed one aboriginal man and, despite protests from the marchers, refused to let him go.

Demonstrators ripped a large stanchion off the doors of the parliament building and using a flagpole, wheel-braces and crowbars smashed their way into the front hall of the building.

Police said 40 people were taken into custody. Four were charged and more charges are expected after police inspections of news footage of the incident. At least 60 police

were hurt, including two with broken ribs, and one with back injuries. A policewoman knocked to the ground was kicked and punched.

The rally had been called by the Australian TUC (ACTU), who were hoping for a tame protest in which angry workers would be allowed to let off steam. They were distressed by the size and mood of the demonstration.

Prime Minister John Howard immediately condemned the scenes outside parliament and demanded that ACTU renounce the violence.

Howard cut short a scheduled meeting with ACTU president Jennie George and ACTU secretary Bill Kelty after just seven minutes. He said he would not negotiate under duress, but agreed to meet them again in a fortnight. 'This meeting is terminated,' he curtly informed them.

M George, visibly upset, said ACTU organisers had nothing to do with the storming of the parliament buildings.

'I made it very clear to John Howard that I resented any inference that any incidents that may have occurred during the day had anything to do with the ACTU,' declared a tearful George.

Australian Labor Party (ALP) and federal opposition

leader Kim Beazley was soon in on the act. He too condemned the violence and expressed his condolences to the injured.

As recently as June, Beazley declared: 'In principle, we think a government should have its budget.'

In other words the ALP leaders accept the right of the government, backed by less than 50 per cent of the voters at the election, to launch its attacks against the living standards of the working class.

Shocked

The size of the demonstration in a capital city that is remote from the major population centres undoubtedly shocked opposition and government leaders alike. It is a measure of the anger at the attacks the government has launched after its victory at the March elections, during which Howard fraudulently declared: 'No Australian will be worse off.'

Many workers voted for the Liberals after 13 years of corruption, lies and attacks on

workers by the Australian Labor Party, which in its years of office moved inexorably to the right.

Recent polls have shown that the government is losing support after its measures against Australia's working people have been revealed.

Sixty per cent are on record as saying that they would support attempts to reject budget measures that are 'unfair' or involved broken promises, and 60 per cent wanted the government to abandon proposed cuts in areas such as higher education, health and welfare.

The Australian budget cuts come hard on the heels of announcements from the United States that welfare entitlements are to be reduced to below those established in the 1930s.

Here again is evidence that we are dealing not simply with the 'policies' of this or that government but with an international trend in the world capitalist system.

It is a trend that demands an internationalist response from the working class.

'Razor gang' prepares knife

BY MIKE COOKE

THE DOLE, pensions, child care, schemes to help the unemployed back to work are all facing the knife under Australian federal government plans. Many of the proposals are revivals of the Coalition's 'Fightback' policy from the 1993 federal election. The Coalition lost that election.

Among options being considered is withdrawal of dole from people out work for more than 12 months.

A Social Security 'early internal departmental working document' leaked to the press has revealed plans to pay for a \$4 billion family tax-break package promised in the elections out of \$6.5 billion benefit cuts over four years.

The document details about 90 budget options put forward after a Department of Finance request. Pensions are to be sliced up with much tougher means-testing (saving \$1.3 billion).

Children's allowances for the over-12s could be abol-

ished (\$182 million). Dole eligibility after 13 weeks rather than two is also on the cards (\$650 million).

Means-testing the childcare rebate is another 'option' (\$240 million). This violates a 'firm' Coalition election pledge. Rent assistance to the poor would be cut by \$500 million.

Currently pensions are reduced by \$3 a fortnight for every \$1,000 of assets over a threshold. The new plan would cut it entirely (saving \$277 million over four years).

Liverpool dockers

Monday 9 September: TUC lobby. Contact London support group (0956 138496) or Unison (0171-388 2366) for details of coaches.

Saturday 28 September: First year anniversary march and rally, Myrtle Parade to Pier Head, 1pm.

DOCKERS CHARTER

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Available from the Liverpool Docks Shop Stewards' Committee, c/o 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. Money to 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Appeal'. Price 50p (20p unwaged). Add postage. Also send donations. Bulk orders tel: 0151-207 3388.

Mersey dock profits sink

BY DOT GIBSON

POLICING of the 11-month dispute between the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has hardened with the announcement of the company's half-year profit loss of over £3 million.

On 20 August, police arrested five on the Norse-Irish picket line. The four men and one woman were charged and will appear in court next month.

The shop stewards are appealing against a decision that in future their picket lines must be 400 yards from MDHC property. They have

asked MPs to mount an inquiry into police actions.

'We saw the level of police presence and the way they waded in and snatched our people,' said shop steward Kevin Robinson. 'We decided to calm things down by sitting on the road. The police backed off but came back with reinforcements. So we marched up to the "Alex" gate in good order.'

In a BBC interview on 21 August Jimmy Nolan, chair of the Mersey Port Shop Stewards' Committee, said MDHC's loss of profits resulted from the dockers' international boycott of container shipping lines. 'This will be stepped up to include Shell,' he said.



The Wise-up theatre company from Scotland do their stuff in Tuzla, see page 3 Photo: Lisa Beckman

Workers Press

New Labour and the needs of capital

LAST week Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott, turned his attentions from cavorting around the beaches of Britain to give an interview to the *Independent* wherein he gave us the benefit of his latest 'thoughts' in the field of ideology and politics.

His performance in the latter spheres was as indecorous as that in Cleethorpes where, in front of conveniently-placed cameras, bag of fish and chips in hand, he distributed sticks of rock to bemused holiday-makers who had no doubt gone to the coast in the hope of a little relaxation and enjoyment.

Clownish, embarrassing and contemptuous though such behaviour is, Prescott has been given a serious and cynical role in Labour's high command. It is to try and kid working-class Labour voters that nothing in the party has changed fundamentally under Blair, that 'new Labour' is essentially the 'old' Labour Party of Attlee, Bevan and Morrison.

Prescott, it seems, has written a pamphlet, *The Spirit of 45*, wherein he attempts to defend this message. Perhaps he should confine his efforts to dishing out rock.

* * * * *

THE blunt fact is that there has been a decisive change in the policies and programme of 'new Labour' compared with the old-style Labour Party.

The Labour Party today has completely renounced the possibility of even the most minimal reforms within the capitalist system. Indeed it vies with the Tories in how tough it will be against the working people of this country should it come into office.

Far from extending the system of welfare benefits, as did the Labour government after 1945, Blair has made clear that the Tory cut-backs in welfare will be maintained and where necessary extended. If the Attlee government saw the creation of the modern 'welfare state', the Blair government bids fair to superintend its final destruction.

This sea-change has nothing to do with the individuals concerned. The postwar Labour government was dominated by those — Attlee himself, Ernest Bevin, Stafford Cripps, Herbert Morrison — who completely accepted capitalism and the 'war against communism'. From this point of view Blair, Brown and the rest are no different.

What has changed is the condition of capitalism, in Britain and internationally. The postwar boom is definitively at an end. That boom lasting from the end of the war in 1945-46 until the middle 1970s was based on the enormous destruction wrought by the war itself and on the power of US capital to regulate, within limits, the capitalist system as a whole.

The ability of the United States to accomplish this task also depended crucially on its collaboration with the now-collapsed Stalinist bureaucracy in forging a 'new world order'.

* * * * *

SO WHILE both Blair and his 1945 predecessors were and are equally loyal to the preservation of the capitalist system, the needs of that system have now changed.

The Labour leaders can no longer grant concessions to a privileged few in the working class and on that basis seek to tie the whole of the working class to capital. Now they must directly attack the working class — its standard of living, its rights and its organisations.

But if Prescott and the right are spreading confusion about the significance of 1945, the same can be said of elements of the 'left' in the Labour Party.

Thus when Tony Benn last spoke to a rally in Liverpool in support of the sacked dockers of that city he declared, it must be said to considerable acclaim, 'We did it in '45 and we can do it again!'

But unless the quite new conditions under which the working class is now fighting are recognised — that, whatever illusions there may be in sections of the working class, to all intents and purposes social democracy is at an end — there can and will be no effective counter-attack against the onslaught of capital.

Thus the restoration of the level and scope of benefits that existed in the pre-Thatcher years, let alone their extension, now requires not the election of a Labour government but the mobilisation, against the capitalist system, of the whole of the working class in which it can establish its real power.

Letters

Uganda

IT IS interesting that the report I wrote on Uganda in last week's *Workers Press* ('Ballot-rigging wins the day') coincided with widespread one-sided coverage of the struggle of the peasants of Uganda against Lt. General Yoweri Museveni's military dictatorship.

What was presented in Robin Denslow's article in the *Guardian* (13 August) and the BBC's Newsnight programme the same day was a description of the peasant-based Lord's Resistance Movement/Army uprising against the Ugandan dictatorship as 'the Devil's work', and a 'swoop to kill villagers, abduct youngsters and rape girls'.

These perceptions hide the root cause of the war in northern Uganda, where in 1986 Museveni's regime uprooted peasants. The IMF/World Bank policies he has followed since then have resulted in large numbers of workers being laid off. These people have had no choice but to fight back. In the absence of freedom to self-organise politically, they have taken up arms.

Regrettably, Museveni and his half-brother Salim Saleh, using their wit and charm, have succeeded in convincing world opinion that they are the people who will turn Uganda's 'terrible' reputation around and provide stability in East and Central Africa. They have been helped in this deception by the British government and media.

We recently received a statement from the Lord's Resistance Movement/Army (LRM/A) which puts in doubt the credibility of the alleged rebel defectors interviewed by Robin Denslow. It said:

'On 13 August, a Ugandan, Mr Benson Ojera, appeared on the

BBC 2's Newsnight programme claiming to have been an LRA soldier. He further claimed to have been Major General Kony's personal assistant before he allegedly fled from the bush. . . .

'We would like to state here categorically and sincerely to our readers and the world at large that Mr Ojera has never been in the bush, at least not as a member of LRA.'

A few days before Robin Denslow and the BBC crew, accompanied by Lynda Chalker, the Tory Overseas Development minister, were given access to northern Uganda, Major Salim Saleh declared a ban on the reporting of the on-going war, saying:

'We don't want to fight journalists. We want to tell the journalists what to report and not report' (the *Monitor*, 31 July-2 August).

It is evident that just as the British government and media assisted in the rigging of the so-called constitution-making process and the elections that followed, they are now helping the Uganda dictatorship cover up the genocide it is carrying out in northern Uganda.

British companies, in association with Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary outfit with a mineral-prospecting section, are engaged looking for gold in north-western Uganda.

Lonrho, the British-based multinational is also known to have interests in the oil deposits in southern Sudan, to the north of Uganda.

The use of northern Uganda by Britain and other western companies as a base to counter the so-called threat of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' from Sudan, is hence a good excuse for protecting these economic interests.

The infringement of basic rights of workers and that of a

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free press and political association, which the regime is perpetuating, and the peasants are opposing is of no consequence to western governments and media.

Alfred Banya

Down with 'ethnic cleansing'

I WOULD appreciate it if you would publish the following declaration, passed by the annual world congress of Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (SAT) — the World Non-nationalist Association, which organises worker Esperantists:

The 69th congress of the World Non-nationalist Association, the worldwide Esperantist workers' association, which took place in St Petersburg from 13 to 20 July, with 240 participants, representing 21 countries and based on its statutes and under the slogan, 'The world without barriers of national prejudice.'

1. STATES that everywhere in the world, attacks against the life and the living conditions of the workers are taking place. Inequality between the various social levels is growing in almost all countries. In addition there is continued destruction of environmental riches.

International bodies, such as the IMF and transnational firms impose drastically ultraliberal capitalism on the peoples, while the mass media spread individualism and non-solidarity.

The economic policies applied lead to the dismantling of social rights and public services.

2. WARNS that the concept of

'ethnic cleansing' is an incitement to crime and itself a violation of humanity.

It particularly condemns those who desire to use violence against human beings and wars against peoples or ethnic groups.

It appeals for a just peace in Palestine, Chechnya, Northern Ireland, etc.

It condemns economic embargos against Cuba, Iraq and other countries.

It firmly supports the campaign of Amnesty International against torture and the death penalty.

It considers that war criminals from ex-Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Chechnya should be tried, in whoever's camp they are in.

It opposes all dogmas and philosophical, political and religious fanaticism and emphasises the role of rationalism, tolerance and mutual discussion.

3. INVITES all workers, genuine democrats and leftists throughout the world:

to recognise that exploitation still goes on and to consider new forms of social struggle;

to stand up against the forces of nationalism, racism and chauvinism.

It draws attention to the role of Esperanto, not only to facilitate international contacts in the battle for a more just social order, but also in overcoming the barriers of national prejudices between people of diverse nationalities.

It calls for co-operation with workers' Esperanto groups and organisations for this goal and asks for particular support for the work of SAT.

John A. Spencer
Press officer
SAT en Britio
Tel: 0181-800 0454

No slave labour! No benefit cuts!

THE Job Seekers Allowance is the most drastic change to the welfare system for the unemployed for 50 years. It will impoverish hundreds of thousands of people when it is implemented on 7 October.

Many will be forced into low-paid work and the JSA will bring down the wages and conditions of all workers.

West London is being used as a 'lead area' to test out structural aspects of JSA. Already Civil and Public Services Association members working in benefit offices have taken strike action over this issue and other ballots are taking place.

West London and Uxbridge CPSA branch secretary Chris Ford has called on trades councils, union branches and unemployed groups to attend a march

organised by London Against JSA on Saturday 7 September.

The march has been called to highlight the role of workers and claimants as guinea pigs for the new system.

In the absence of a major national demonstration, this represents the only opportunity prior to implementation to register mass protest against the JSA in London and across the country.

March against JSA, Saturday 7 September. Assemble 12noon, Shepherds Bush Green, London. Rally 2.30pm, Labour and Trades Council Hall, 16 Church Street, off Acton High Street. London Against JSA, PO Box 3140, London E17 5LJ. West London and Uxbridge CPSA. Tel: 013990 42347/42150. Fax: 013990 42344.

Bosnia Solidarity Campaign Who are we?

Statement of aims. Only 50p from Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, 26 Framlingham Close, London E5 9PR. Tel: 0181-806 0249.

Cable Street commemoration Demonstration, Sunday 6 October

Called by Cable Street '96 Commemoration Committee, Cable Street Group and Tower Hamlets Trade Union Council

Assemble 10am for rally at Altab Ali Park, near Gardiner's Corner. March 11am to St George's Town Hall, Cable Street. Speakers and festival, 12 noon. Bring your banners! Bring your friends!

Tower Hamlets Trade Union Council: 0181-555 7045.

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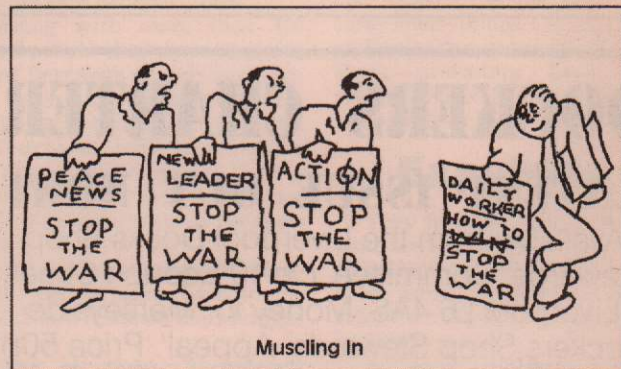
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28 September: all roads lead to Liverpool! Polluters threaten Merseyside

CHRIS KNIGHT, member of the London Dockers Support Group, warns of the growing environmental danger to the Merseyside — and proposes an action against it

THE PEOPLE of Merseyside are in danger. Hazardous waste passing through the Port of Liverpool has increased from a mere 754 tonnes in 1989 to 6,000 tonnes last year. This figure shoots up to 13,500 tonnes if solvent wastes are included.

Clearly the waste recycling industry has been depending on Liverpool in a big way.

It is this that makes the current docks' dispute in the city an issue for green activists everywhere. When Liverpool's 500 remaining registered dockers were sacked on 28 September last year for refusing to cross a picket line, the people of Liverpool lost one of their few remaining protective shields.

Liverpool's dockers, like good trade unionists everywhere, have always been responsible, publicising health and safety violations and refusing to unload dangerous cargos.



The Mersey dockers' dispute will be a year old on 28 September

In 1989, for example, they learned that the Canadian government had backtracked on a commitment not to export the PCB-contaminated remains of a fire at a chemical storage facility at St Basile le Grand.

The notorious waste disposal company RECHEM won a contract to dispose of approximately

3,000 tonnes of this material, to be sent in 15 separate consignments from August of that year.

But the very first consignment, on a ship called the Nadezhda Obukhova, was met at Liverpool docks by a barrage of protest as Greepeace and community groups voiced their opposition to the toxic load.

The dockers refused to unload the cargo, forcing the ship to return to Montreal.

This was a tremendous victory for the environmental movement: The Quebec government cancelled RECHEM's contract in mid-August and subsequently the Canadian government announced an end to all exports

of PCB-contaminated waste. But now in Liverpool scabs have taken the place of class-conscious, organised dockers. A scab by definition doesn't care: he will handle any shit for money. On the docks, such a workforce will simply obey orders, unloading anything, regardless of safety.

This may even explain why the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company provoked the strike in the first place: they needed a docile labour force if Liverpool was to submit to its planned role as a dump.

Toxins destined for a new local incinerator, radioactive waste bound for plutonium reprocessing at Sellafield, cheap coal mined by children in Columbia, explosives... nothing now seems excluded.

'First we have coal dust, now we face the threat of explosives,' said Winifred Ollerton from Birchdale Road, when news broke that the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company had applied for a license to enable it to handle military waste.

'It seems that the port authorities can do just whatever they want to do,' she said.

Across the water from Liverpool, the Irish chemical and pharmaceutical industry generates 100,000 tonnes of waste per year, of which 20,000 is exported, mainly to Britain.

animals. Duck eggs and other foods have been banned from human consumption.

If the proud dockers of Liverpool are beaten into submission, will the city be turned into an immense dump for toxins and nuclear waste shipped in from the four corners of the world?

One man, certainly, would gain from this. Intriguingly, RECHEM is owned by a company called Shanks McEwan. Its chairman is none other than Gordon Waddell — who just happens to be chairman of the MDHC, which locked out 500 dockers a year ago.

Time

There is time yet to save Liverpool. The 500 dockers are still confident and fighting, demanding full reinstatement. Their international blockade has brought the port to a virtual standstill. Anxious to end the dispute by a knock-out blow, their leadership — the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee — has now laid plans for a massive gathering of all the oppressed in Liverpool on 28 September, the anniversary of their dispute.

The event is billed not only as a labour movement demonstration but also as an environmentalist, anti-roads, anti-capitalist, pro-entertainment celebration and rave.

With mobilisation through the Freedom Network and the rave scene, it promises to be a massive show of force.

Remember that this action concerns the planet: never before has a picket line literally flown around the world to galvanise class solidarity on so international a scale.

If you puke at the very thought of Tory Blair's 'New Labour', remember too that the 28 September event immediately precedes the opening of the Labour Party conference in Blackpool — just up the road from Liverpool.

Be there, be prepared to stay a night or two. And bring some sound.

Mozart and fire-eating in Tuzla

BY JOHN DAVIES

THE Art of Freedom Festival — Umjetnost Slobode — came to a dramatic candle-lit conclusion in Tuzla's central park last Saturday. Mozart, Balkan music, Spanish dancing and a Bosnian adaptation of Herman Hesse's Sadata were the prelude to a noisy Catalan firework display involving devils and whirling firecrackers.

The week-long festival had started in some confusion. A combination of election pre-occupations, continuing infrastructure problems and a certain amount of understandable scepticism on the part of council officials as to whether the convoy would actually arrive had meant that preparations for the festival were by no means completed.

The Arts Convoy from Britain and Spain, which formed the backbone of Umjetnost Slobode, was the fifth attempt by western artists to put on an arts' event in Tuzla.

For various reasons, usually financial, all the previous events had been cancelled. Local people were very surprised when the convoy of over 100 technicians, actors, painters, sculptors, rock and folk musicians, photographers, potters and classical singers actually materialised.

Fortunately, the presence of a

large group of Workers Aid, Student Aid and Ayuda Obrera veterans kept problems both manageable and in perspective.

Whatever difficulties the festival was having to negotiate, they were nothing compared to the snow-bound Mt Milankovic faced by previous conventional Workers Aid convoys.

The festival opened with a procession through the centre of Tuzla. **Wise-up**, the Scottish community theatre company, wowed locals with their puppets and musicianship, and **Dods**, their kilted punk bagpiper, was a particular hit.

Amazed, applauding locals hung out of windows and many joined the procession. What the Ifor officer made of the 8ft-high bronze mutant stilt-walker who molested him, we can only guess at.

Festival

The festival was opened in the National Theatre of Tuzla by representatives of the mayor and Carl Bildt, by John Graham Davies of the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign and by the Tuzla-based Amica theatre company.

DJs **Bing Bong Sounds**, **Joe Marshall** and **Carla**, singer-songwriter **Mel Bell-Grey**, acoustic group **Mish Mash** and street performers **Vic, Olaf** and **George** then took the entertainment back outside into the cafes and streets.

Visual art played an important part at the festival, although logistical problems prevented the artists' work being properly integrated with the rest of the programme.

Exhibitions were put on at the miners' hall and at Dom Mladih and a number of installations were built in the park. A piece of work incorporating signatures collected in Whitehall by the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign last summer on its non-stop picket is now being exhibited in the Tuzla Portrait Gallery.

Other activities included some video showings, including **Latcho Drom**, a celebration of Romany culture, theatre workshops for young people organised by Manchester students, dance workshops with women from Srebrenica and a number of art and photographic workshops for young people.

Attention towards the end of the week was focused on two concerts. The first featured about 15 local Tuzla bands, with some British input, and attracted several hundred young people to the recently rebuilt hand-ball stadium.

On Friday, a large big-top went up. Despite serious logistical problems, a six-hour concert went ahead with local bands, British bands **Stimulus** and **Sober Chloe**, with current chart band **Dodgy** topping the bill.

Dodgy's instruments had been impounded by Slovenian customs but the other bands helped them out and the result was a night to remember: bright, crisp harmonies, a brass section you had to move to, and some taut, muscular drumming to hold it all together.

The final ceremony in the park had to be lit by a combination of candles, a cavers lamp and the lights of the film-crew. This and the Bradford City-shirted security crew at the Dodgy gig vied for the most surreal moment of the week.

Absurdity

The event was saved from absurdity by the large and enthusiastic throng of Bosnians who gathered round to hear the various performers.

At one point a war veteran in a wheel-chair, determined to discover where the Mozart was coming from, burst through to the front. Australian soprano Anna Hobbes, resplendent in blond curls and recital gown, returned his open-armed gesture of welcoming by directing the rest of the aria to him.

Let's hope such moments aren't lost when the festival is better organised next year.

■ A festival committee has now been set up in Tuzla. Anyone wanting to help with next year's event, please contact John Davies on 0113-262 2705.

Working day and night to rebuild

BY GEOFF ROBINSON

IN ADDITION to the Arts Festival, a Workers Aid contingent of vehicles from Bradford, Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester and Brighton delivered aid to the Tuzla and Banovici areas.

The bulk of the aid was delivered to the town council of Celic, a large village with an upper school and a canning factory.

Throughout the war it was on the frontline and we saw extensive war damage.

The canning factory was hit over 300 shells and most of it is still devastated.

One corner has been brought to production but they are still extremely short of parts to get

the cooling system and other parts of the process going. The school was also substantially hit although the people of Celic have worked day and night with local building materials to get it reopened but they have no equipment for the classrooms, gym, etc.

The village's major problem is being cut off from the rest of Bosnia because the main road is still under Chetnik control. To deliver the aid we had to drive for over three hours on roads that were little better than dirt tracks.

We were told by the people of Celic that they would welcome Serb neighbours back but Karadzic's forces are arresting returning Serbs and keeping them in jail for 30 days to discourage resettlement.

The office equipment, computers, telephones and fax machines will enable the council and the school to establish regular contact with other areas of Bosnia and the outside world.

Workers Aid members held a series of meetings in Tuzla including one with the Spanish and Bosnian comrades which was attended by about 100 people.

Barbecue

Discussions with the miners' union led to a barbecue and social at the miners' holiday camp with about 50 British comrades and miners from all the major districts.

A day's conference to discuss these meetings and the future

direction of our solidarity work will take place in Manchester on the third or fourth weekend of September.

The message we were getting was that our solidarity work and the aid are still extremely welcome. There are areas such as Gradadze which are cut off and still in need of primary aid.

Other areas need more thoughtful and targeted aid to help in the physical process of reconstruction but it is equally important to maintain the commitment of the unions to a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Although no one is predicting how long the ceasefire will last, discussions did take place on the implications for Bosnian workers of such changes as privatisation.

Plants

Irish environmentalists have so far successfully stopped the building in Ireland of a 'merchant incinerator' like RECHEM's controversial plants elsewhere.

Meanwhile it suits the Tories and their friends to import toxic waste for commercial reasons. It has been widely rumoured that RECHEM is to build an incinerator in Liverpool like the one that has been pumping PCBs into the densely-populated environment around Pontypool in South Wales.

Farmers from miles around that plant have complained of mysterious diseases killing their

'Don't come back'

BY SEAN HEFFERON

WORKERS AID FOR BOSNIA trade unionists from Brighton and east London have returned from a two-week convoy to Tuzla where they delivered aid and held meetings with Bosnian trade unionists from several industries.

Aid delivered by the convoy included over 200 personal hygiene parcels to the pensioners' association of Tuzla's Batva district, 500 teddy bears and other toys to the city's only orphanage, surgical supplies to the medical logistics centre and educational materials earmarked for the Tuzla region's schools and university.

Convoy members held meetings with representatives of the independent miners', teachers' and transport workers' unions.

Welcoming the convoy, Fikret Suljic, leader of the Bosnian miners' union, stressed his union's determination to remain independent of the employers and the

state, but said this could only be achieved with the international assistance of unions in other countries.

All of the Bosnian trade unionists stated their commitment to a multi-ethnic Bosnia. But the national elections in September, called under the Dayton agreement, could see an increase in support for the Muslim-dominated SDA party of Izetbegovic, which was using its dominant position in government and the media to swamp the electorate with nationalist propaganda.

Fragility

Whatever the result of these elections the fragility of the Dayton agreement was brought home to convoy members by Croatian customs officials on the Croat-Bosnian border at Orasje.

After deliberately delaying the convoy for 16 hours on various pretexts, officials handed convoy members a note advising them not to return in future.

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Street wise

CAMPAIGNING outside Canadian office premises on Trafalgar Square, support of the Liverpool dockers, meet all sorts of people. Two Rhode Islanders readily signed our petition, recognising the need to defend unionists. A woman from Radcliff, in Lancashire, visiting her daughter, strongly supported the dockers' fight for jobs.

Two elderly sisters up from the country were bewildered at first. 'Why they stopped casual labourers ago?', they asked. Their father, who worked as an unemployment benefit clerk in London's docklands, told them about the hiring pens where the men sent home without work. I got to discussing other aspects of Tories' return to Victorian values', the homeless on the streets.

Another woman stopped to read our letter, then apologised as she stuffed it in my tin — 'I'd give more but I'm on a pension.' She knew about equalisation. 'It happened where I worked, in the civil service.'

'But what gets me', she added, pointing at leaflets and the London support banner, 'is why there's nothing about this on the news. I wouldn't have known what's happening in Liverpool hadn't met you people.'

Making links

GRADES on the docks' support met when Nelson Mandela crossed crowds across the square called the non-stop picket outside Africa House, campaigning for Mandela's release. South African workers' struggle continues, under difficult conditions, against a government headed by Mandela.

With the workers' struggle in Indonesia in the news, and the freedom struggle in Indonesian-occupied territories, some people are making links. East Timor Alliance South Africa (ETASA), launched last year in Cape Town, aims to encourage 'people-to-people links', campaign against the occupation of East Timor, and develop links with other groups internationally. Given not only the open atmosphere for political work in the newly democratic South Africa, but also the reports that President Nelson Mandela received financial aid from the Indonesian government, and rumours that South African arms may be sold to Indonesia, this is a very appropriate time for such a group to be set up' (*Pol Bulletin*, August 1995).

Like our Workers International Grades, they may test the limits of South African democracy. (ETASA's address is c/o Centre for South-South Relations, 2nd Floor Melofin Centre, Klipfontein Road, Athlone, Cape Town.)

Copic's fate

FOR information on Lt. Colonel Vladimir Copic, who commanded the 1st International Brigade in Spain, including British volunteers. Describing its military setbacks in 1937, Peter Carroll (in *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*) remarks, quite accurately: 'According to one Soviet veteran the disaster led to the recall — execution — of Colonel Copic.'

Carroll neither names his source nor questions the explanation.

Copic edited the Serbo-Croat translation of Lenin's works, and represented the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Third International, before being sent to Spain, where he was wounded before being promoted to command the brigade.

In 1938 he returned to the Soviet Union, where with Tito he took charge of translating the Short History of the Communist Party of the USSR into Serbo-Croat; shortly thereafter, however, he fell victim to the Stalinist 'purges' (Lazitch and Drachkovich, *Biographical Dictionary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia*). Yugoslav party secretary Josip Broz Tito and his wife were executed too. Tito had a close escape.

Charlie Pottins

Ireland

State brutality exposes

The following statement from the WRP's political committee analyses the recent turmoil in the north of Ireland in the context of the historical contradictions imposed by British imperialism's occupation

LAST month's brutal assaults by the RUC on the residents of the Garvaghy Road and the continuing conflict in other working-class nationalist areas in the north of Ireland have effectively swept away any remaining claims that there could be a peaceful, negotiated road to the removal of partition and the end of state terrorism.

The actions of the RUC and the British army also conclusively demonstrated the scale of Sinn Fein's betrayal through its involvement in the so-called 'peace process' and its acceptance of 'exclusively peaceful methods'!

As the Catholic working class again confronted the armed forces of the British state on the streets they were treated with the same brutality that has marked the conflict over the past 28 years — in the space of a few days the RUC fired over 6,000 plastic bullets and a demonstrator was crushed to death in Derry by a British army vehicle.

Undeclared struggle

THESE confrontations are the latest stage of a continuous and undeclared struggle. In October 1968 a peaceful Civil Rights demonstration in Derry was savagely batoned off the streets by the police. The failure of the Civil Rights campaign and the arrival of

British troops accelerated the movement of the Catholic working class into direct conflict with the state.

Since then the armed might of British imperialism — backed by repressive, anti-democratic legislation — has attempted to smash this uprising, which has seen heroic sacrifices and many acts of mass rebellion. Every act of state terror — from internment and torture to censorship and murder — has failed to subdue this struggle which although it has been fought mainly around nationalist issues and under nationalist leadership is objectively part of the struggle of the international working class for socialism.

'Peace process'

THE British capitalist now relies on the leadership of the Irish Republican movement which through negotiations with the London and Dublin governments is attempting to reach an accommodation with British imperialism that can only betray the demands and aspirations of the nationalist working class.

After the RUC brutality on the Garvaghy Road and the other confrontations in July, this 'peace process' is in ruins. But Major and the Tories have little option but to attempt to revive it.

At the heart of this process is the need for imperialism to behead the national struggle by channelling it into a six-county assembly which it is claimed will operate on the basis of a liberal parliamentary democracy — free elections, freedom of assembly, etc.

The Framework Document of the Dublin and London governments — which the Sinn Fein leaders accept as the basis for negotiations — is a recipe for more repression. It was not because of any pressure for

'peace' that Sinn Fein are driven towards these negotiations. They are forced to attempt a deal with imperialism by the class nature of their political programme.

The struggles and sacrifices of the past period are reduced by the petty-bourgeois leadership of Sinn Fein to a gamble on their belief in the progressive roles of liberal democracy and capitalist expansion.

The Sinn Fein leadership has sold the idea to its membership that cross-border bodies of this six-county assembly and the Dublin government, alongside massive international investment, will eventually show partition to be an obstacle, an irrelevance.

A majority of the Unionist population, they say, will recognize this and it will lead to a peaceful agreement for the removal of the border and an all-Ireland democracy based on a thriving economy.

This is a dangerous illusion. Any attempt to put together an assembly at Stormont represents a threat to the Irish working class and endangers everything won in struggle against the armed forces and laws of the British state as well as the industrial struggles of the organised working class.

Increased attacks

INTERNATIONAL capital will only come to Ireland on the basis of increased attacks on the gains of the organised working class — privatisation, casualisation, part-time jobs, de-unionisation, etc.

Integration into the capitalist world economy does not mean prosperity for countries like Ireland. The north's political and economic survival depends on industrial subsidies

at twice the level of depressed areas in Britain.

Foreign capital being invested in Ireland, like capital generally, seeks to impose low wages, poor conditions and no trade union organisation.

Underlying contradictions

THE lack of any progress towards agreement — despite innumerable meetings of representatives of the Dublin and London governments and the Irish political parties, as well as the ending of the IRA ceasefire and the confrontations over Loyalist marches — is a symptom of the underlying contradictions and the extreme difficulties which imperialism has in putting together a deal which can be sold to the six-county political parties.

The Sinn Fein leadership is being asked to make concession after concession. These concessions amount to a surrender of any gains made by the working class. In no way can British imperialism grant any democratic rights.

The British declaration, repeated in the Framework Document, that they have 'no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland' has been swallowed by Sinn Fein. But it is a blatant lie.

Although the economic interests of imperialism are no longer intertwined with the Unionist parties who were the political representatives of native six-county capitalists, the partition of Ireland is crucial to the continued exploitation of the working class, north and south, through their division. It is still in the 'strategic' interests of British capitalism to maintain this division.

British troops are an army of occupation used to implement the repressive legislation and terrorise



Civil Rights Association demonstration in the late 1960s

s 'peace process'

all those who mobilise against partition. The Framework Document makes it clear that the troops will not be withdrawn.

It was a gain when Stormont was abolished. A six-county assembly can only be put together by the present British and Irish political parties on an even more anti-democratic basis than before. This is a most important lesson of the past 28 years.

Civil Rights demands

ALL the demands of the Civil Rights movement were formally conceded but in practice this was shown to be meaningless. It is impossible for full democratic rights to be granted when there is such profound hatred against partition and a movement to remove it. The main Civil Rights demands were:

■ One person, one vote. This concession was immediately followed by the removal of all meaningful powers from local authorities.

■ Abolition of the Special Powers Act. This was replaced by the even more repressive and anti-democratic Emergency Powers Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

■ Ending of discrimination in employment. The Catholic unemployment rate is currently two-and-a-half times that of Protestants.

It was the movement of the Catholic masses in 1968 in a struggle for independence and democracy which began this stage of the prolonged war against British rule in Ireland. It became apparent very quickly that these democratic questions put the national question and its resolution on the agenda.

Leadership

SINN FEIN won the leadership of this struggle and have been able to divert the fight for democracy away from any connection with the need to change the social relations of production — the fight for socialism.

The nationalist working class continues to support Sinn Fein and the IRA despite the horrific bombing casualties and the knowledge that the IRA cannot militarily defeat the British army.

This support is on the basis that 'at least somebody is doing something' in the face of the draconian legislation and army and police brutality.

The involvement of the Sinn Fein leadership in negotiations with British imperialism without winning a single concession conclusively marks the end of this stage in the struggle.

Not only has the Republican leadership dropped the demand for withdrawal of British troops, it no longer raises any demands which challenge partition and around which the working class can be mobilised. The programme and perspectives of Sinn Fein cannot be characterised as anti-imperialist.

And yet no revolutionary movement can stand aside from the IRA youth. Although we strongly disagree with their methods, which flow from the Republican movement's rejection of the working class as a revolutionary class, we defend all those who have fought imperialism.

In the face of the bitter attack on his character by the capitalist media this includes defence of the memory of Edward O'Brien killed by his own bomb in a London bus. We demand the release of all political prisoners.

Partition and state terror

THE Sinn Fein leadership works to separate the fight against partition

and the state terrorism of the police and army from the day-to-day economic struggles of the working class.

In this it has been assisted by the craven actions of the leaders of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who have resolutely refused to involve the organised workers' movement in a campaign against the anti-democratic legislation and against British rule.

They have reduced the workers' movement to a talking shop pleading for 'peace', that is, a maintenance of the status quo with no resistance to any of the methods of imperialist control.

It is false to counterpose the fight against partition and the fight for workers rights and socialism. They are inextricably linked goals, neither of which can be achieved independently of the other.

It is only in and through the reconstruction of the workers' movement that the only force that can smash partition, the working class, will develop the necessary forms of organisation to carry out this task.

And it is only through confronting the effects of partition — the division of the Irish working class, discrimination against Catholics, repressive legislation backed up by state terrorism — that this reconstruction can take place.

This reconstruction demands taking to a higher level the unity of Protestant and Catholic workers which already exists in everyday trade union struggles.

We reject the idea that the fight by the nationalist working class over the past 28 years, 'the troubles', is a different fight from that on wages, housing, etc. — that it is a diversion from the class struggle.

Building unity

THERE can be no unity of Protestant and Catholic workers that will stand the test of the capitalist onslaught if the effects of partition on the working class are not tackled.

There are now real opportunities for building this unity. The collapse of Stalinism means that the main advocates in the workers' movement of the stages theory — the idea that democracy and socialism in Ireland can only be fought for in distinct and separate stages — are thrown into turmoil.

The Communist Party of Ireland was influential in theoretically disarming and dividing those forces which confronted the state from 1968.

The Republican movement's adoption of the programme of a series of peaceful, gradual stages — including the democratisation of Stormont — led to Catholic areas being left undefended before loyalist mobs in 1969. This sparked off the split into Provisionals and Officials.

This split, and the subsequent development of the Officials through the Workers Party and Democratic Left, facilitated the Sinn Fein leadership in maintaining its isolation from the workers' movement.

Today the CPI and Sinn Fein have an identical perspective of a united, capitalist Ireland — the main difference between them is that the CPI is opposed to the very existence of the IRA.

Partition has its roots, not in religion, but in the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland. British colonialism in the 18th century retarded the development of a national capitalism in most of Ireland but was unable to stop the linen industry in the north-east taking advantage of historical opportunities in the world market.

This gave birth to the traditional industries of engineering, textiles

and shipbuilding owned by the Unionist bourgeoisie and the driving force of partition was the need to maintain their markets inside the British empire.

With the virtual disappearance of these industries and the dominance of multinationals, the material basis for the relative advantages of the Protestant population is being removed.

Loyalism, which depended on the strength of British imperialism, is thrown into confusion by the structural crisis of imperialism which has to find new ways to maintain its rule in Ireland.

Conflict with Protestants

THE British state is forced into a conflict with the Protestants of the north of Ireland in conditions where large sections of the working class are still not defeated. They have felt and used the strength of their trade unions. Attempts to lower their living standards by breaking the link with negotiated rates of pay and holidays in Britain will be met with a fight.

The British ruling class's historic support and involvement with the arming of sections of the Protestant population can now pose major problems for capitalism.

Already the deep sense of betrayal against Britain has produced physical forms of resistance against the British army, police and prison warders.

Some aspects of this resistance will inevitably take the form of reactionary anti-Catholic activities and it is clear that a very unstable situation is developing in which the British state is now unable to exercise its past control.

However, the only way in which the Protestant working class can resist what they see as a sell-out is through their emancipation as a class.

This means above all that they break from the all-class alliance of the Unionist parties and fight for an independent workers' party on an all-Ireland basis. Their natural allies are not Unionist politicians and the Unionist bourgeoisie — but the Catholic workers!

All supporters of a united Ireland in Britain have a special responsibility to campaign inside the workers' movement for a British withdrawal, for the unconditional defence of all those fighting British imperialism, and for the independence and unity of Ireland.

The experience of the campaigns in Britain on such issues as the repeal of the PTA, banning of plastic bullets and release of Irish political prisoners, demonstrates that they cannot be won as single-issue campaigns. And Blair's support for increasing police powers under the PTA shows that there is no prospect of a 'New Labour' government easing the repression.

THE Workers Revolutionary Party has taken the decision to take part in the setting up of a new political organisation for the building of a new socialist party of the working class. We will fight to incorporate these campaigns into the programme of the new party, linking them with all the struggles of the working class and forging connections with Irish workers on this basis.

We call on all those fighting for an end of British rule and a united, socialist Ireland to collaborate in the movement for a new party and to make a specific contribution to the 4 November conference which will launch this new organisation.

Science focus

A monthly column by Daniel Robertson, principal scientist at a leading bio-technology company

Is there life in NASA?

MOST readers will be aware of NASA claims of evidence of life in a meteorite from Mars found in the Antarctic in 1984. This is claimed to be the best evidence yet of extra-terrestrial life and comes in a year that has seen the first clear proof that planets circle a number of nearby stars. The 'fossils' are claimed to be 3.6 billion years old.

Space scientists are also excited by some strange phenomena being reported from Europa, one of Jupiter's moons. There is some evidence that this body may contain liquid water, organic molecules and even traces of oxygen in its atmosphere. Free oxygen is a rarity in nature and its presence is very interesting. Titan, a moon of Saturn, is another candidate for a possible life-supporting environment. Could it be possible that life might exist in several places in our solar system?

A hypothesis supported by some scientists is that life developed fairly early in the evolution of the universe and spread out through space on astronomical debris to seed all planets with the ability to support organic chemistry. Life rapidly developed on Earth, and perhaps on Mars, as soon as conditions were right.

If this is true the universe might be expected to be teeming with life, posing the question — where is it?

Putting on one side the claims of UFOlogists there is no evidence yet of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, at least not evidence that we can recognise at present.

So what about the possibility of primitive life as claimed for the Martian 'fossils'?

The evidence is based on:

■ The presence of bodies in the meteorite that look like bacteria.

■ Organic chemicals typical of life.

■ Mineral deposits that on Earth are associated with micro-biological activity.

■ The presence of ratios of isotopes of some elements that suggest biological activity.

The problem with NASA's claims is that these 'fossils' are actually a tiny fraction of the size of terrestrial bacteria posing doubts that they could contain enough internal biochemistry to support life.

Balanced against this doubt is the recent discovery of microbacteria from deep within the earth's crust curiously similar to the Martian 'fossils'. The organic molecules present can be found in a wide range of rocks that do not contain any traces of life.

The other evidence is also controversial. But NASA's argument is that all this evidence together is strongly suggestive of life.

Sadly this announcement's timing is suspicious, coming as NASA continues to fight for funds, particularly to search for extra-terrestrial life. But this is still the best, indeed only, evidence of life elsewhere.

We will have to wait for conclusive proof from closer examinations of Mars. A space probe that will bring back samples is planned for early next decade.

What are this discovery's political implications? This is yet another nail in the coffin of believers in original creation. If life is a common property of matter then the need for a 'creator' is made increasingly absurd.

Irrational beliefs seem to be prospering during Capitalism's period of decline. Confirmed proof of the natural generation of life elsewhere will be a powerful victory for a rational and materialist view of the universe.

NASA's site on the internet is an excellent source of material on the 'fossils', with plenty of photos. Related pages have some brilliant material, including spectacular photos from the Hubble space telescope.

Sellafield fallout drifts west

THE threat to health posed by leaks

from Sellafield is not just an issue to citizens of Britain. The eastern coast of Ireland has been a prime site for pollution from the former Windscale. Indeed, the Irish Sea is recognised as being the most radioactive stretch of water in the world.

Clusters of Down's syndrome births have been reported from County Louth which is opposite Sellafield.

This area was covered with radiation from a nuclear accident that occurred in 1957, possibly contaminating young girls who later gave birth to Down's syndrome babies. Heavy rainstorms over Dundalk immediately after the fire, the full extent of which has been kept secret until recently, possibly concentrated the radiation.

The hypothesis is that it then entered the food chain through consumption of milk from cows that ate contaminated grass.

Scientist Dr Patricia Sheenan who originally discovered the cluster before her death in a road accident, received numerous death threats. This is a common occurrence now when vested interests are threatened. Scientists investigating BSE have received similar threats.

A heated debate has broken out in the Irish media. British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) have drawn attention to the lack of any hard evidence demonstrating a link between exposure to radiation and Down's syndrome births.

But the rotten reputation of the British nuclear industry for lying has damaged their credibility beyond retrieval. As the truth of the extent of nuclear accidents comes to light more evidence of associations with health problems can be expected.

Herbal joy beats Prozac

RECENT research has confirmed the claims of herbal practitioners that the common plant St John's Wort has some remarkable properties. It has been used traditionally for centuries for a number of conditions including treating depression.

Now clinical trials have confirmed that it may be as or even more effective for mild to moderate depression than the usually prescribed drugs such as Prozac. This heavily-hyped antidepressant drug has made a fortune for pharmaceutical big business and become a way of life for many stressed-out Americans.

St John's wort is also free of the side effects that accompany many modern drug treatments.

I have written before of the dangers of some of the remedies appearing in the proliferating Chinese high-street herbalists. But there is no doubt that medical big business with its preference for patentable synthetic remedies, is missing some tricks here.

A natural, and more effective remedy for depression will be a big blow to their profits and a victory for traditional popular wisdom untainted by a desire for cures that can be monopolised for profit.

Socialist Science Forum

AFTER a short summer break the SSF is about to spring back into life hopefully more convincing than the Martian 'fossils'! We will be meeting at the Lucas Arms, 245a Grays Inn Road, London WC1, at 7.30pm on Wednesday 4 September.

As well as normal SSF business there will be an informal discussion led by John Robinson on his views on human consciousness as described in *The Individual & Society — A Marxist Approach to Human Psychology*, available from Index Book centres. There will also be discussion of the proposed new political organisation.

■ The NASA homepage is at: <http://www.nasa.gov/index.html>

On the national pride of the English

IN A private letter to the editor, a reader has expressed the view that the editorial in the 6 July issue of our paper, entitled 'Patriotism and the pseudo-patriots', was 'populist tosh'.

It's a shame, I think, that a reader who takes this view should choose to express it privately rather than initiating what could be a highly interesting discussion, one not wholly unrelated to the current discussion in this paper on the need for a new socialist party, and one from which all of us might learn something.

In the hope of starting such a discussion I will venture to undertake the defence of the criticised editorial. Most readers, I suppose, still have the issue in which it appeared; but, for the benefit of those who haven't, I begin with a short summary and a quotation.

After referring to the *Daily Mirror's* mock declaration of 'soccer war' on Germany and the *Sun's* equally chauvinistic campaign of 'blitzing Fritz', the editorial pointed out that the England-Germany football match had not been followed by a wave of anti-German feeling; except when provoked by police in riot gear, the English supporters had behaved with restraint.

Tony Blair, like Tory leaders and gutter press editors, was displaying pseudo-patriotism by waving the Union Jack; he shared the Tory passion for celebrating British military conquests and leaders. But the Union Jack was a butcher's apron — the flag under which colonial liberation movements had been crushed with deadly weapons. The editorial continued:

True English patriotism is working-class patriotism. It casts a cold eye on the English conquest of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, which was carried out in the interests not of the common folk, but of kings, noblemen, and adventurers. It celebrates the centuries-long struggles of the labouring people of England, from John Ball and Wat Tyler in 1381, through Gerrard Winstanley in the 17th century and the Chartists in the 19th century to the pickets of the 1926 General Strike. It remembers that, 350 years ago, the English people fought a civil war to rid themselves of a corrupt and despotic monarchy.

English working-class patriotism insists above all that every advance of democracy and civil liberties in England, without exception, was won by the struggle and sacrifices of English working people against a corrupt and ruthless ruling class. The English workers, whom Karl Marx called 'the first-born sons of modern industry', set an example to the working class of the whole world by their creation of trade unions in the teeth of repressive anti-union legislation, as well as by developing all manner of self-help organisations, by sustaining a tradition of working-class self-education, and by waging a long and stubborn fight for the vote.

English working-class patriotism has nothing in common with the pseudo-patriotism of Blair, Major, and the Daily Mirror. For it is not based on seeing people of different countries and cultures as enemies, rivals, or inferior beings. It is in fact inseparable from working-class internationalism, and it places international solidarity as its highest moral imperative.

In conclusion, the editorial referred to the fraternisation at Christmas 1914 between English and German troops on the Western Front, and declared: 'Those English troops were acting in the best traditions of their class, as were the German troops with whom they fraternised.'

PERSONAL COLUMN

what the word 'populist' means in this context. It seems to have started life as the name of an American political party which existed from 1891 to 1904, was based largely on western farmer and labour reform groups, and had as one of its demands the free coinage of silver.

'Populist' was also used from 1895 as a literal translation of the Russian *Narodnik*, the name of the party which prefigured the Social Revolutionary Party (and had some temporary influence on the young Trotsky).

But I don't think our critic has either of these meanings in mind. I take him or her to be saying more or less what a reviewer in the journal *New Community* (Winter 1984-85) was trying to say when he called a certain book 'a radical populist history... which resists the urge of historical materialists to dissect the popular movement through class analysis'.

In other words, the editorial was lacking in class analysis. But was it? Read it again. It certainly isn't overloaded with jargon or technicalities or acronyms, and the absence of such signposts alone necessarily constitutes a heinous crime in some people's eyes. But it does speak of 'the labouring people' and, repeatedly, of the English working class and its historic achievements, including the world's earliest trades unions.

Is there really something inherently suspicious and undesirable in English national pride when its object is not military conquest, colonial oppression, and ruling-class bombast, but the struggles of the poor and dispossessed over the centuries, and of the industrial working class since its emergence some 200 years ago?

If 'Patriotism and the pseudo-patriots' is to be dismissed as 'populist tosh', why should we not then dismiss with identical strictures Trotsky's remark in 1937: 'We say: we are the genuine patriots. But it is necessary to embody that with the content of revolutionary struggle, of class struggle' (*Leon Trotsky on China*, 1976, p.558). And was that not precisely what the editorial in question did?

If the editorial was 'populist tosh', on what grounds should we not criticise in identical terms Lenin's celebrated article 'On the National Pride of the Great-Russians', which takes pride in the Russian language as well as the Russian revolutionary tradition? Lenin wrote:

'Is a sense of national pride alien to us, Great-Russian class conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country. . . . We are full of a sense of national pride' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 21, pp.103-4).

Just as England was, and is, two nations, so English patriotism has two quite distinct meanings. As revolutionary socialists and internationalists we indeed have nothing in common with the chauvinistic pseudo-patriotism of a Churchill, a Thatcher, or a Blair.

Ours is the true patriotism that looks back on, and draws strength from, generations of revolutionary struggle. Ours is class-struggle patriotism.

To the editorial's partial list of great Englishmen, beginning with Samuel Johnson (who once scandalised 'some very grave men at Oxford' with the toast: 'Here's to the next insurrection of the Negroes in the West-Indies'), many other names might be added.

Here are just four: the pioneering abolitionists Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp; the black Chartist leader William Cuffay, born in Chatham; and the 'Anglo-African' composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, born in Holborn.

Peter Fryer

POPULIST tosh? Well, to start with, I'm not absolutely sure

Edinburgh International Festival

Who's afraid of Irving Welsh?

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

MIRANDA RICHARDSON's much-praised performance in Texan director Robert Wilson's version of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, seen at the Edinburgh Festival last week, follows on from Tilda Swinton's very different but equally accomplished portrayal in the 1992 Sally Potter film.

Thirty years ago one of the leading postwar American dramatists, Edward Albee, wrote *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (made famous by the Elizabeth Taylor/Richard Burton movie). I see now why he chose the title.

Albee's play is about a night in the collapsing relationship between an ineffectual literature professor and his acerbic wife. In her *Orlando*, Woolf parodies English literary conventions, and implicitly questions the fixed notions of gender-roles and sexuality which help underpin conservative ideas about English history.

Woolf's hero/heroine begins life in Elizabethan England and traverses four centuries to end up as a 20th-century writer, having in the meantime undergone a sex change from man to woman. Enough for any conventional, male, Eng. Lit. lecturer (or any other establishment figure he might be taken to symbolise) to be at least a trifle nervous about.

In its day — it was published in 1928 — *Orlando*, the novel, had considerable success, but the striking thing about it is that its themes still strike chords.

For some male critics, Woolf (who, fearful of mental illness, drowned herself in 1941) remains a figure to be put down as a lightweight when indulging in this lesbian *jeu d'esprit*.

In the current staging, Miranda Richardson gives a two-hour *tour-de-force* of a solo performance. But too often it seems designed from the outside rather than internally conceived. There are exciting patterns of light, dark and colour, provided by Wilson's minimalist set; and Richardson's tightly disciplined movement and androgynous appearance sustain interest. The audience is seduced by inventive costume changes.

But even the way Richardson speaks the text seems to reduce the human content of her performance, to make theatrical technique into the master of ceremonies rather than the facilitator of communication.

There are fine moments, as when the actor (in 19th-century mode) seems almost physically to weave her way through a great tapestry of words to emerge as an ironic Britannia-like figure, scornfully dismissive of 'the British empire'. But many may

find the movie (which has a delicious performance by Quentin Crisp as Elizabeth I), and the book, more readily accessible.

From official Festival to Fringe and the need to update Albee's question. Who's afraid of Irving Welsh? Or rather, why does nobody seem to be?

To go to Harry Gibson's production of *Trainspotting* (Assembly Rooms) — returning to Edinburgh after selling out last year and spending time triumphantly in London and on the road — is a bit like attending the play of the film of the play of the book. Welsh's drug-culture, Edinburgh-based novel, with its theatrical and cinematic spin-

Yet nothing that happens in the show seems to disturb anybody. More people walked out of *Orlando* (in boredom and incomprehension) than out of *Trainspotting* (in protest or disgust). This was not the case, I recall, when the Welsh novel first hit the boards in dramatic form; and one woman, on leaving the theatre this time, *did* ask me if I had known what I was going to see, implying that she hadn't and that she was put out.

But on the whole *Trainspotting* has become part of the entertainment scene, and is cheered to the rafters when performed — a reception, be it said, that the utterly committed cast of Gerard

it. Nor can political answers be demanded of the creative writer.

But in providing the leading character, Mark Renton, with an escape route Welsh can, I think, be charged with an artistic lapse into sentimentality. Not surprisingly, the film version of *Trainspotting* exploits this weakness most crudely.

But without a politically effective conception of the real social nature of alienation of which the drug-scene is such a sharp expression, the fate of many will be closer to Tommy's, who nearly stays clear of danger, but then becomes HIV-positive and in the process of dying.

Gibson's stage production,



Miranda Richardson as Orlando

Photo: Sean Hudson

offs, has become a more popular cult than *Orlando* ever was.

In all its versions, *Trainspotting* contains endless street-language, explicit sexual imagery, and representations of violence and drug-injection. In the theatre, the now famous toilet scene is performed symbolically, but its language is richly scatological.

And at the end two male actors come downstage, undo their jeans and perform full-frontal urination. Ones admiration for the thespian technique involved in so performing daily and on cue is tempered by the thought that the audience (or at least the front row) comes close to being literally pissed on.

Butler, Tom Walker, Cameron Jack and Glenna Morrison fully deserve.

Part of the reason for this certainly lies in the integrity of the original writing; in the way — to use an appropriate metaphor — it cuts through the crap of literary convention to show it like it is. Welsh has probably done more to provide insight into the housing-estate drug scene than a hundred official reports.

But can judgement be left there? Welsh elevates his material into art in a particular way. He cannot be accused of making what he describes seem acceptable and he often makes it very funny, but he does not glamorise

indeed, could have made more of the frightened, naked figure of Tommy. (Tom Walker plays what we do get of the scene beautifully.) What should be an overwhelming and enduring image gets rather lost in the racy flow of the narrative en route to its watery end.

It is the nature of the success of the novel, the play and the film — rather than the work in itself — that makes it important to go beyond critical adulation. What is to be done with the perception of things that Welsh's writing makes available? The author has made a contribution that cannot be left at the level of art for art's (or commerce's) sake.

De Lorean's dream millions

EVENTS last week in a New York court again exposed the bankrupt economic policies of British capitalism. The British government is suing the auditors of the De Lorean Motor Company in an attempt to claw back some of the money it handed out for political reasons.

For the first time ever British cabinet papers were released for a court case after the court ruled they had to be made public.

These papers have confirmed the belief, widespread at the time, that the De Lorean venture was bound to crash and that John De Lorean gained considerable sums of money from successive British governments.

Production of the gull-winged sports car, advertised as the 'dream' in the US, collapsed in 1982 with the loss of 2,000 jobs in west Belfast. The bulk of the £77 million hand-out has not been accounted for and is believed to be lying in a Swiss bank account.

John De Lorean was subsequently set up by the FBI and sent to prison after he was filmed in a hotel room exchanging suitcases full of money for suitcases full of drugs supplied by FBI agents posing as drug dealers.

The cabinet papers reveal that the main reason behind the Labour government's decision in 1978 to fund the project was the need to attempt to blunt the sup-

port for the IRA. Roy Mason, the then secretary of state for the north of Ireland, told a cabinet meeting in July 1978 that it was 'of the utmost political, social and psychological importance that the project should go ahead'. He added: 'This would be a hammer blow to the IRA.'

Thatcher's Tory government continued to dole out the millions. In response to demands for further cash in February 1981 the minutes record: 'We cannot settle this on commercial grounds alone. The De Lorean venture has become something of a symbol for HMG's commitment to Northern Ireland.'

Again the myth of 'free mar-

ket economics' is exploded. It was not only in west Belfast that British governments attempted to shore up the crumbling system and bring some form of stability to the north of Ireland through financial inducements.

Massive grants have been handed out for factory buildings, machinery, training and marketing. Rate-free periods and lump-sum intervention amounts were there for the taking.

The particular weakness of the British economy dictates that there must be a cut-back on these lucrative presents and this is a major factor in the current attempts to do a deal in the so-called 'peace process'.

The need for a new socialist party

'What a real working class party should be like'

This week we have two more responses to the initiative taken by the Workers Revolutionary Party towards the building of a new socialist party. Each week we aim to print a selection of views on this matter.

Anybody interested in taking part in this discussion should mail, fax or e-mail (see back page) your contributions which should be 300-400 words in length.

The conference called last March by Workers Press under the title: 'Crisis in the labour movement — the need for a new socialist party' decided to set up a steering committee to continue its work.

NEXT MEETING: 7.30pm, Tuesday 3 September, YWCA, 16-22 Great Russell Street, London WC1. (Tubes: Holborn or Russell Square.) PLEASE NOTE change of venue.

For more information about the steering committee and its plans for the future contact the coordinator, Steve Ballard, 0181-889 7255

I AM going to describe my views about what a real working class organisation or party should be like. I do so because all the present organisations on the left claim to be the only genuine or real one, but an authentic organisation or group will try and develop and improve in practice and not simply in words.

First of all I appreciate your attempt to build the new organisation to respond to the needs of the working class movement and to overcome past weaknesses and I see many positive steps in your proposed new programme and policy.

First of all can I say that I agree with the most important points in the article that appeared in Workers Press of 20 July ('The basic line of our work'), but at the same time I think that there are some wrong interpretations of your points and some points I believe need adding.

I STRONGLY agree with the following points that you have raised:

1. This must be an organisation based on Marxism.
2. It must be an internationalist party.
3. The emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working class and cannot be achieved by a party supplied to it.
4. Socialism cannot be achieved through parliament.
5. That the division between 'economic' and 'political' struggles is a reactionary one and one that must be overcome.
6. The importance of Ireland for the new party.
7. That the strategic aim of the new party must be socialism.

IN THE belief that you have missed some important points, in the list below I present some views which have been derived from my past experience of the Iranian revolution, the weaknesses I have seen in Iranian and British political organisations, and in the working-class movement generally.

- We are still few in numbers

and have not yet won big numbers in the working class. We should therefore not call ourselves a party but an organisation in the process of working towards a party.

- The majority of the members of the new organisation should be drawn from the vanguard of the working class.

Those present organisations that are based on a non working-class membership cannot be the party of the working class. Only the working-class vanguard is able to carry out the revolutionary programme.

That is why today we are faced with a situation where a number of left organisations have pretty programmes but are not active in the movement.

- We should not see leadership as a God and I therefore think it wrong to see and call a working class party Leninist, Trotskyist, Stalinist or ... Marxist, even though I believe that Marxist theory and ideas best represent communist ideology and that is why I want to see the party based on Marxism.

The important point is that we should not create new Gods in our party for this has nothing to do with socialism.

- A working-class party should participate in and help strengthen every struggle in which the working class is involved, however low the level of the struggle. The party should fight each struggle alongside the working class to the end.

- A revolutionary party, unlike a reformist organisation, does not rely on small reforms but in every struggle of the working class aims to develop socialist ideas and solutions as the only truly radical alternative. The reformists rely on tiny gains, like small increases in wages.

- A working-class party does not spend all its time talking, simply watching the struggles of the working class; but this has been

the reaction of most British political organisations to the present disputes of the working class in this country — the Liverpool dockers, the rail workers, the Hillingdon strikers.

- A working-class party should not elect some special group as theoreticians and have others who simply sell papers or distribute leaflets.

This is a bourgeois attitude which unfortunately is all too common in political organisations. This reflects the divisions between mental and manual labour in capitalist society.

- We must get rid of the dangerous belief that socialist consciousness comes from outside the working class.

This is the conception of many left groups who think they should build a party and offer it to the working class. They think that the working class is incapable of forming and building the party itself. This also gives them the excuse for not supporting the day-to-day struggles of the working class.

- In my experience most political organisations on the left look after their own interests instead of those of the working class.

This is the basis of their sectarianism which prevents them from uniting with other groups in support of the struggles of the working class against capital.

The best example of this is the way a number of groups have boycotted the London Dockers Support Group.

- The working-class party we are aiming to build should not encourage people to vote Labour because this will only foster illusions in the working class. Instead we should encourage them to vote for candidates drawn from the vanguard of the working class.

Hassan

Iranian Workers Association
and the London Dockers'
Support Group

City Lights

A long hot winter

CURRENCY movements, monetary disturbances, and the like are often regarded as the preserve of the so-called 'specialist', recondite things that 'ordinary people' can never hope to grasp.

And yet the activities of the speculators — the big insurance companies, the pension funds, the banks and so on are to the fore in these sordid activities — have the most direct impact on the lives of millions of just such ordinary people throughout the world.

Thus in Jordan today, the intervention of International Monetary Fund with its laughable 'stabilisation programme' has, amongst other things, doubled the price of bread. Thousands came out on the streets in protest, and in turn called forth the most brutal response from the Jordanian army and that old friend of the British ruling class, King Hussein.

It is appropriate to recall that renowned phrase of the 19th-century historian and man of letters Thomas Carlyle. Under the rule of capital, he avowed, it is the 'cash nexus' alone which expresses the real relations between human beings.

The only things that capital knows is money and profit. As far as it is concerned the only real relations are those in which money can be made or, more precisely, surplus value can be ground out of the working class.

This being so, a disturbance in monetary relations between capitalist states is a sure sign of the growing tension in the class struggle, the struggle between the owners of capital and the working class in particular.

LOOKING at the history of 20th-century capital, it is apparent that all major economic and social crises have been associated with, if not sparked off by, monetary crises.

Thus it was in the period prior to the 1926 general strike when Britain went back to the Gold Standard. So it was in the years 1929 to 1931, when the same country, Britain, was forced 'off gold'.

And likewise in 1971, with the demise of the postwar Bretton Woods monetary arrangements, an event which sparked off global inflation and paved the way for the ignominious collapse of reformist, Keynesian political economy.

Pursuing this same theme, the erosion of British capital's hegemony in the present century finds its closest reflection in the chronic decline of sterling as an international trading currency.

This is why it is necessary for socialists to pay the closest possible attention to monetary relations. And none are more significant today than relations within Europe and especially those between the Deutschmark and the French franc.

Why? Because the relations between these two currencies constitute the axis on which the Common Market — incarnated as the European Union after the Maastricht treaty — and its plans for a common currency have turned for the last three decades and more.

The powerful German economy and its seemingly invincible industry, along with the *franc fort*, would, it was suggested by the 'financial experts', provide the basis for a single European currency and in turn lay the foundation for a sustained challenge to both the United

States and Japan in world economy.

That is why the growing tension between these two currencies is a matter for Europe as a whole, for the global capitalist system, and not least for the working class.

The Bundesbank [the German central bank] continues to act as if the franc and the mark were not destined to fuse in two-and-a-half years.

The omnipotence and authoritarianism of Frankfurt were scarcely accepted by its partners when the German economy was strong and virtuous, but they are rejected out of hand now the German model is collapsing.

The aura of the Bundesbank has diminished in Europe at the same pace as the rise of German unemployment.

Thus leading French economist Pierre-Antoine Delhommais writing in *Le Monde* last week.

He is expressing a situation where the French ruling class is finding intolerable the strains of trying to maintain its alliance with Germany.

Indeed the bankers of Frankfurt are being pilloried by Parisian financial commentators for stubbornly refusing to lower interest rates in Germany, which at least might give the franc a short breathing space.

But, as is widely recognised, even if the German central bank at its meeting last Thursday agreed to lower its rate of interest this can bring only temporary relief for the beleaguered French currency.

For, despite all its promises, the French government has been quite unable to deliver the sharply reduced budget deficit that among other things would allow France to achieve the necessary targets for monetary union with Germany by the scheduled date of January 1999.

In other words, only a definitive defeat of the French working class, clearly not achieved in the last wave of strikes, will now satisfy the blood-thirsty 'markets'.

French Prime Minister Juppé has sworn that there will be a reduction of some F60bn, or 2 per cent, in public spending over the coming year. The financiers think that a snowball in hell would have a better chance.

Already in the first half of this year the French budget deficit was barely reduced from its 1995 level, and is already approaching the full-year target of F288bn.

On current form the budget deficit — the gap between government spending and its tax revenues — will be the equivalent of 4.7 per cent of GDP, or more than 50 per cent above the Maastricht criterion for monetary union.

But it is clear that the French working class is in no mood to accept even the level of cuts already proposed, far less those necessary to achieve 'financial stability'.

The cuts so far announced will hit at 'job creation' schemes and thereby add to the French unemployment level at almost 13 per cent.

Growth in the French economy is under 1 per cent with all that means for tax revenues.

One thing is clear: the hollowness of President Chirac's neo-Keynesian tales of 'economic reconstruction' and 'social inclusion' — made at the time of the election are in ruins — are exposed as a sheer fraud.

As one writer in the *Guardian* said last week, perhaps the only solution will be through 'a crisis played out on the streets of France' (David Gow, 'French people must be forced to face harsh truth about their currency').

It's been a hot summer in France. It looks as though we are in for an even hotter autumn and winter. Threadneedle

'The best paper in Britain for decades'

I HAVE BEEN a Labour Party member all my life and am still on the editorial board of *Labour Briefing*.

I don't intend breaking with my comrades in *Briefing*, but on one point I agree with Workers Press — defeating Blairism will involve creating a new, centralised and disciplined workers' political organisation.

I am in favour of a campaign to build a new workers' party which will reclaim the labour movement for our class, assemble on this basis an anti-capitalist coalition embracing all the oppressed, and spearhead the revolutionary struggle for state power.

My sister, Liz Knight, became heavily involved last year with the JJ Fast Food strike. Through her I became aware of the issues and regularly travelled up from south London to stand on the picket line.

But 'stand' is the wrong word. I should say I came to *dance* on the picket line, because that is what we did. A fire would be built and around it — to the sound of pipe and drum — the strikers would perform a traditional dance from the mountains of Kurdistan.

The first time I was invited to join in, just as dawn was breaking, I knew for sure we would win!

By the time of the victorious end of that strike early in the new year, new friendships had been made, and we were wondering how to build on our success.

By chance I had a Workers Press in my pocket, announcing the founding meeting of the London Dockers' Support Group. I suggested attending this together.

Many of the Kurdish and Turkish comrades had already marched with the dockers in Liverpool, and they showed no hesitation.

DOCKERS CHARTER

1. No return to casual labour.
2. Real jobs in a profitable and expanding port for the unemployed of Merseyside.
3. No victimisation. All sacked workers to be reinstated.
4. Reinstated trade union recognition, and recognise elected shop stewards.

THANKS!

The latest Dockers Charter

erpool, and they showed no hesitation.

At the launch meeting in Holborn, they heard a magnificent speech from Doreen McNally of 'Women of the Waterfront'.

Within weeks, a strong Kurdish contingent, complete with pipe and drum, was again marching with the dockers through Liverpool, even though the strike in north London was now over.

At the end of this march we all went for a few pints to dockers' leader Jimmy Nolan's favourite haunt — Peppers. Over the Guinness, our Turkish/Kurdish comrades in discussion with Jimmy hatched the idea of a dockers' delegation to Turkey. Little did we guess then what an impact the dockers would make.

I mention all this to show how I became involved with the comrades around Workers Press. What particularly impressed me was their help in editing and producing the *Dockers Charter* — their commitment to work with

and learn from the dockers, giving them their own voice.

It seemed a refreshing contrast to the many sects which see themselves as teaching the workers from on high. The result, in my view, has been the best workers' paper to have been produced anywhere in Britain for decades.

Over the past year the Liverpool dockers have placed themselves at the head of the entire working-class movement, in Britain and to a significant extent internationally.

Never before has a picket line established in one country literally flown across the world and galvanised solidarity action on such a scale.

By risking personal safety in defence of the hunger strikers and the Labour (Emek) Party in Turkey, and by addressing strikers in occupied Kurdistan, the dockers have lifted their own struggle onto a still higher plane — that of the global struggle for human and labour rights.

They are testimony to the fact that the working class — and ONLY the working class — can consistently defend such rights.

Although much remains to be done, the dockers have taken the first steps in assembling what could prove to be a new international.

Given the obstacles they have had to brush aside, the achievement is breathtaking — recalling Marx's celebrated words: 'The emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself.'

The question for Marxists is whether we are, whether we deserve to be, part of this new leadership. Those who are fighting with the dockers, learning from them in struggle, will naturally also be heard by them. Those preaching 'Marxism' from the sidelines will rightly be treated as an irrelevance.

I will urge my comrades in *Briefing* to support this paper's initiative to dissolve the Workers Revolutionary Party, dissolve as many other small groups as possible — and together construct a disciplined, unified, Bolshevik alternative to 'New Labour'.

I should add that my own preferred rallying cry for this project remains Trotsky's culminating slogan from the *Transitional Programme*: 'Break with the bosses — take the power!'

The one thing a Labour cabinet will never do is to take state power into their own hands.

Disillusionment with Blairism following an election win will be rapid, overwhelming, throughout the labour movement — and devastating. As 'New Labour' prepares for office, our task is to prepare for power.

Chris Knight
London Dockers'
Support Group

Defying Serb nationalist reign of terror

WITH elections due throughout Bosnia next month under the Dayton agreement, Radovan Karadzic's Serb nationalists have no intention of surrendering their reign of terror.

At a meeting in Banja Luka on 27 July, Karadzic's Serb Democratic Party (SDS) and other Chetnik (Serb nationalist) parties agreed that the so-called Republika Srpska would remain a separate state, in disregard of the Dayton agreement.

Candidates and parties based outside would be barred from elections, they decided; and indicted war criminals Karadzic and General Mladic, should be protected from prosecution.

American journalist Mike O'Connor visited the Chetnik-held town of Teslic, in north-central Bosnia, slipping past a police checkpoint to a private house, where a meeting was arranged.

'After making contact there, a talk is arranged with one leader. Once the visitor is screened, a meeting follows with other leaders. Voices are kept low, eyes constantly dart to the street, and one of the men bursts into tears when telling about the pressure they are all feeling. These are men who have survived years of extreme nationalism and ethnic cleansing that forced their friends and themselves into silence' (*New York Times*, 31 July).

O'Connor found some optimistic, although confronting 'a monolithic power structure' composed of the ruling party, local police, some civil officials, and 'the more nationalist elements of the Serbian Orthodox Church'.

Those who run things took control at the outset of the war four years ago, calling themselves the true leaders of the Serbian people, and expelling most Muslims and Croats. Karadzic's SDS placed its own men in charge of the city government and police. A Serbian Orthodox priest with a reputation for violence has considerable power.

'People who oppose them talk of beatings and bombings of their homes and businesses,' O'Connor reports. 'They say that thugs attack participants at opposition political gatherings while police officers watch. And they speak of telephone calls that keep them

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

nervous for days because threats can be carried out with impunity.

'In our town these days, when someone calls you a disloyal Serbian or an enemy of the Serbian people, you know that he is justifying violence against you,' one local said.

Serb nationalists expropriated abandoned businesses and farms, and distributed them among their supporters. They also took control of local state-owned businesses, which they are now hoping to sell.

'From the outside, the struggle is only politics — who will be the next mayor, and so on,' a NATO officer said. 'But that's just the beginning. The current leaders have nearly complete economic control. If they lose the election, they lose all that too.'

Cover

At times decisions carry a 'legal' cover from the Pale 'government', as with the recent dismissals of a number of moderate Serbs who were executives of state-owned factories. At others, such as when remaining Muslims were forced to flee, they are implemented by toughs organized by important party leaders.

And when the council chose to use violence after finding that opponents were gaining strength, it turned to a band of 12 to 15 men who follow orders from the priest, the opposition say. 'The police tell us they can't guarantee there won't be anyone hurt if we hold a rally,' said one organiser. 'We all know what that means.'

Many Teslic residents yearn for a return to pre-war days when, they say, Serb, Muslim and Croat townspeople got along well. They say that given the chance they would like to rejoin the rest of Bosnia. 'Below the surface, under the repression, we believe we can reject this nationalism,' one man told O'Connor. 'We hope we can survive the peace and create democracy.'

Bosnia: Social Democrats protest

BOSNIAN Social Democrats and other parties have protested against political intimidation and harassment by supporters of President Alija Izetbegovic's SDA party.

Two opposition rallies, at Gradacac in northern Bosnia, and Kalesija, in the east, were disrupted, and a third was called off for fear of violence.

About 30 young men wearing SDA T-shirts began shouting through a loud hailer as soon as the Gradacac rally began. 'Alija, Alija,' they chanted. 'The mob was organised and police were

involved too,' charged Tuzla's Social Democrat mayor Selim Beslagic, who was to have been a speaker at the rally.

'It's obvious that some people are not ready for pluralism,' said Stjepan Kljucic, former member of the collective presidency who heads the opposition Republican Party.

Social Democrats in Tuzla have accused the SDA of replacing managers of state-run companies in the town with its own nominees.

Opposition spokesperson Jasmin Imamovic said the state has the right to administer the

companies but only in accordance with federal law.

In a blatant piece of chauvinism, the SDA's mouthpiece in Tuzla, the fortnightly *Zmaj od Bosna*, on 22 July complained that more than 40 per cent of the Social Democrat-led coalition candidates in Tuzla, and six out of ten of those heading its list were non-Muslim.

'That's a greater percentage of non-Bosniaks than before the war in the municipality of Tuzla,' said editor Vedad Spahic. 'That's too much for anyone who has even a little national consciousness...'

An SDA election advertisement dispalyed a crescent moon and the slogan: 'We know what the Croats will do. The Serbs will vote for themselves. What about you?'

In a joint statement condemning SDA supporters' behaviour at the two rallies, nine political parties, including Social Democrats, the Muslim-Bosniak Organisation, Liberals, Republicans, and former prime minister Haris Silajdzic's Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina said that under present conditions fair and democratic elections are not possible.

'Elections now back partition'

FORMER Bosnian prime minister Haris Silajdzic, now leading the opposition Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, has warned that elections under present conditions will not be fair and democratic, and will not carry out the Dayton agreement's stated intention of preserving the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

By forcing refugees to vote in their present place of residence the Serb nationalists had begun separation, Silajdzic told a Sarajevo meeting. 'What's the point of having the elections in September when they will bring the secession of the Republika Srpska and the legalisation of the ethnic cleansing,' Silajdzic said.

Another place where divisions are being maintained is Mostar,

the main city of Herzegovina, which Croat nationalists divided, forcing Muslims and Serbs over the river Neretva, to set up their statelet of Herceg-Bosna.

On 6 August, after tough negotiations and European Union pressure, the Croat nationalist HDZ leaders in west Mostar (linked to Croatia's President Franjo Tudjman) agreed to stop boycotting the city council elected on 30 June, in which Bosnia's ruling Muslim SDS gained a majority.

The Clinton administration, wanting Bosnia's elections and unsolved problems out of sight before US elections, was worried the Mostar deadlock would snag the Dayton agreement's schedule.

President Tudjman, on a visit



Stari Most, once joining Mostar, was destroyed in war

to Washington, promised that the Herceg-Bosna statelet would be dismantled, and Mostar Croats would respect election results and co-operate with Muslims.

Meanwhile, at the HDZ congress, west Mostar mayor Brajkovic said his side's objections were justified, and backed by Tudjman.

Having complained about alleged irregularities in Muslim refugee voting figures (nothing compared to the violence and intimidation in west Mostar, against Muslims and opposition, non-nationalist Croats), the HDZ have raised further conditions for abolishing 'Herceg-Bosna'.

■ Convoy reports, p.3.

South African comrade attacked

COMRADE NM — who was seriously wounded on Friday 2 August by bullets in the stomach and hands by six unidentified gunmen wearing balaclavas — is out of danger. He has been sent home from hospital, but cannot use his hands so his wife must do everything for him as well as attending to the needs of their five children. NM may lose his left thumb and there is a danger that he has lost the use of his right hand because the bullet went through his wrist. We thank those who donated the £230 to the fund to assist him and his family. We hope there will be further responses to the appeal. Please send money payable to 'South Africa Solidarity Fund', PO Box 735, London SW8.

Hussein blames 'foreigners' — but not IMF!

BY ROSS COOPER

KING Hussein of Jordan last week blamed 'left-wing' parties with 'foreign links' for bread-price riots spreading across his kingdom.

Troops with helicopters were in action against rioters in Kerak, southern Jordan, where crowds had attacked banks and government buildings, and the homes of two MPs who supported a massive bread price increase.

On Saturday night, 17 August police clashed with demonstrators in a poor district of Amman, the capital.

For the benefit of Western media, the king blamed 'foreign parties' allegedly linked to Iraq or Syria. In a televised speech he threatened to strike down trouble-makers 'with an iron fist'.

But the 'foreigners' who are really to blame for the trouble in Jordan are the directors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who required the Jor-

dian government to slash public spending. Them and the speculators who have pushed up world wheat prices.

Withdrawal of government subsidies has raised the price of bread in Jordan from 85 fils to 180 fils a kilo (about 16p). Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti has failed to convince people that allowances will ease the impact on the poor. More increases in basic foodstuffs are expected.

Riots

Opposition leader Milhem Tal said the riots were 'spontaneous and guided by no party — except the party of hunger'.

Accusing the government of stealing the people's daily bread so it could obtain loans that senior officials would use to enrich themselves, Tal warned that opposition parties would use 'peaceful, legal and democratic means' to bring down the government, whose existence was a 'provocation to the people'.

Support hunger strikers in France

BY JACKIE VANCE

TEN Africans have entered the seventh week of a hunger strike in protest at the French government's plans to deport them.

Along with more than 100 other people they are occupying Saint Bernard's church in northern Paris. Across France 17 other buildings are being occupied and in Tours and Le Havre protesters are also on hunger strike.

Even a dawn raid by 300 riot police has failed to deter the Paris hunger-strikers.

After being carried off to hospital they all came back to the church and resumed their hunger strike.

One of them, 34-year-old Hamady Kamara, told a *Guardian* reporter how the police raid had increased his resolve.

'It is hard to sleep and we get anxious in the night but we know now that all of France has heard about our plight. If I die doing

this, my life will not have been wasted.'

The church is in a mainly Muslim area and the priest has got together with Imams to raise money from local people. Financial support has also come from some trade unions. Despite living in France for up to ten years, the Paris protesters have been reclassified as illegal immigrants under a 1994 change of law.

Expulsion

They have worked in France, paid tax and social security contributions and many have children born in France. Up to 250,000 people face expulsion under the new laws.

In every country 'Fortress Europe' turns its repressive laws and armed forces against immigrant workers. The workers' movement has to stand in solidarity with the Paris hunger-strikers and all refugees and immigrants.

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