

TUC standing ovation for 500 sacked men

SCABS OUT, DOCKERS IN!

HUNDREDS of Liverpool dockers, Women of the Waterfront, Hillingdon hospital strikers and Unison members lobbied the TUC on its opening day in Blackpool last Monday.

Passionate chants of 'scabs out, dockers in', 'support the Hillingdon strikers', and 'set a minimum wage' filled the narrow streets outside the Winter Gardens.

Women of the Waterfront and the sacked Liverpool dockers ensured their message was carried into the hall by putting bright yellow stickers proclaiming: 'We support the Merseyside dock workers' on the lapels of all who stopped to talk.

Ironically, even Transport and General Workers' Union boss Bill Morris was wearing one of the yellow stickers in the conference hall.

Jimmy Nolan, chair of Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee, explained that 300 dockers and supporters were lobbying to call on the TUC and its affiliated unions to rally behind the dismissed port workers in their justified demand for reinstatement.

'The legislation which the government has imposed on the working class is universal — the TUC must recognise this,' he said.

The liveliest moment in the

**BY LIZ LEICESTER
TUC delegate**

opening day of this totally-controlled and stage-managed conference came when there was a spontaneous standing ovation by a large number of delegates when president Margaret Prosser mentioned the dockers.

From the visitors' gallery the dockers shouted 'scabs out, dockers in' and hung their proud banner from the balcony. Delegates stood to clap and cheer on the floor below.

Emblazoned

General secretary John Monks — with his slogan 'New Unionism' emblazoned across the stage — looked distinctly uncomfortable and a bit anxious at this outbreak of solidarity and class feeling. This 'Old Unionism' is what he and most of the TUC general council want to ditch.

At a packed fringe meeting in the evening, the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee secretary Jimmy Davies said the T&G leadership was being 'abysmal'.

'They haven't given us the financial support we need,' he said. 'The financial position is desperate. People are having the houses repossessed. We don't like asking for help, but we're desperate.'

'We made a conscious decision that we wouldn't cross a

picket line. They're not our jobs to sell and we're not going to sell them.'

Fire Brigades Union leader Ken Cameron repeated the message when he said that jobs in the fire service were also 'not our jobs to sell'. He emphasised that the dockers had given 'strength and confidence' to his members in the battles against job cuts.

In spite of lack of support from the top of the trade union movement, Cameron pointed to the spontaneous standing ovation by TUC delegates as proof that 'the trade union movement as a whole hasn't forgotten what the dockers are doing'.

Winding up, Nolan stressed the importance of the international support the dockers were getting.

In Britain, he said, the political legislation which illegalises legitimate trade union action is the main problem the working class faces.

'The first priority,' he said, 'is for us all to gather together, regardless of union or political group, and build a national movement.'

'The dockers' experience of calling regular meetings and inviting everyone shows it can be done.'

Message to TUC from the Women of the Waterfront

WE THE WOMEN face the harsh reality of dealing with a year of dispute on a day-to-day basis.

WE THE WOMEN lie awake at night wrestling with our new bed mate — **POVERTY**.

WE THE WOMEN have our hearts torn out when a son tells us to sell his bike to pay the electricity bill and younger children hold a 'committee meeting' and report back their decision — 'Don't worry about toys for Christmas, we will have a great time just being together.'

WE THE WOMEN see our children robbed of a year of their childhood.

WE THE WOMEN know the importance of this struggle. Nor is it just for our future, but for the whole of the working class.

We are the caretakers of the future. We are **DETERMINED** our children **WILL** have one.

WE THE WOMEN are strong. We will not be sold out.

WE THE WOMEN are **FED UP** being held on **DEATH ROW** by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

WE DEMAND positive united action by the TUC.

WE THE WORKING CLASS are the union.



Three hundred dockers and supporters went to the TUC conference in Blackpool to make their case to the delegates on their way in to the Winter Gardens conference centre

Magnet workers attract support

DARLINGTON came out in force to show support for 350 sacked workers from the Magnet kitchen manufacturer.

'They have been treated like muck,' said a local shopper, Margaret Clegg, to a local paper, the *Northern Echo*. 'It's a scandal. Some have been there years and look what they get for their loyalty. What about the poor women with their bairns and mortgages.'

The workers went on strike three weeks ago after six months of negotiations with management broke down. They rejected a 3 per cent pay increase for 60 per cent, improved shift and overtime for all and a productivity scheme for the rest.

'It's about time workers fought back to show them we are not going to be trodden on,' Magnet shop steward Peter Hutchinson told the rally.

'It's time to pressure this company nationwide and I believe we have the power to do that.'

■ Money can be sent to the Labour constituency offices, 123 Victoria Road, Darlington. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to 'Magnet Families Hardship Fund'.

Liverpool dockers

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

DOCKERS CHARTER

LATEST ISSUE OUT NOW!

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.

SOUTH AFRICAN APPEAL

Our sincere thanks to the readers who have sent donations to our special fund for comrade NM who was shot and badly injured by masked gunmen on Friday 2 August. We have received £320 so far.

We are glad to say that he is in good spirits and is making a good recovery, although it is not yet clear how much use he will have in his hands. The identities of his attackers remain unknown to us.

We appeal to you to give generously to our appeal to help NM and his family.

Cheques/money orders payable to 'South Africa Solidarity Fund', PO Box 735, London SW8.

Workers Press

Bowing and scraping before his masters

HOW FAR will the Labour leaders go in their betrayal of the hopes and aspirations of the working class?

Last week Tony Blair bowed and scraped before the representatives of capitalist business interests. In order to win their support he pledged that a future Labour government would do everything in its power to enable them to increase the exploitation of their workers.

For the first time ever, Labour will fight an election on a programme that has no proposals on nationalisation. Instead Blair promises no government intervention in industry and 'tough rules' on government spending that will mean further cut-backs in health, education, housing and social services.

No wonder all the institutions representing the employers lined up to praise him. The big bosses club, the Confederation of British Industry, said that Labour had made major shifts to accommodate the concerns of big business.

And the even more right-wing Institute of Directors welcomed 'Labour's commitment to business' while the Federation of Small Businesses praised Labour's 'help for small employers' which they say would nullify any minimum-wage legislation.

BLAIR'S crawling to the bosses was followed by shadow employment secretary David Blunkett's demand this week for new curbs to stop workers taking strike action. New Labour had already made it clear that they would not repeal any of the Tory anti-trade union legislation. But now they are saying that even these vicious laws don't go far enough.

As well as demanding binding arbitration, Blunkett will force unions to hold a new strike ballot every time an employer comes up with a new offer. This is a direct attack on the one-day strikes waged so successfully this summer by the postal workers and the London underground drivers in their bitter fight to defend pay and conditions. Such laws would make it virtually impossible for one-day stoppages to be conducted inside the law. Every time workers vote to strike an employer needs only to amend the offer and, as long as the government's so-called 'conciliation' service ACAS judges it to be a 'significant' change, a fresh ballot would be necessary.

Blunkett revealed a hatred of the working class similar to Blair's cronies in big business as he rounded on all those in disputes this summer.

'Nobody should be under any illusions. An incoming Labour government is not going to tolerate the activities of armchair revolutionaries whose only interest is disruption and who see disputes as an opportunity for mischief-making.'

Blunkett's declaration of war on the trade unions is an extension of Blair's kow-towing to the bosses. A Labour government will come to office charged to carry out the attack on the working class which capitalism now requires.

From the abandonment of Clause Four to the strengthening of union-bashing laws, New Labour demonstrates that it is aware that the age of reformism is gone. They know that capitalism cannot afford any 'little by little' progress to social improvement.

But the Labour leadership's actions will not only affect the working class when it is in government. Blair's crime is that he also paves the way for intensified Tory attacks now.

Across the country millions of workers and youth have no choice but to fight back against the capitalist offensive — from the Liverpool dockers resisting casualisation and the courageous Hillingdon workers refusing savage wage cuts, to the unemployed protesting against the Job Seekers Allowance. New Labour seeks to deny the right to strike because this fight-back threatens to become a united movement to push back capitalist exploitation.

At this historic turning-point for the working class we ask every worker who is drawn into this struggle to tell us what sort of new organisation of the working class needs to be built.

Letters

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Engels and the national question

PAUL SMITH (Letters, 31 August) does well to differentiate between the approach of Engels and that of Lenin to 'the national question'. They lived in different epochs, but these overlapped, and already before Engels died it became apparent that history was taking turns he had not expected and did not allow for.

Lenin had to explain to Inessa Armand at the beginning of World War I that Engels's advice to German socialists, as late as 1891, to support Germany in a war with Russia, no longer applied.

'There was no imperialism in 1891,' he wrote — a view implicitly contested by Stalin in his 1934 memorandum 'On an article by Engels'.

Rosdolsky, whom Smith quotes, regrets that Lenin did not deal frankly with Engels's theory of 'non-historic' nations, and accounted for his rudeness about Czechs, for instance, by reference merely to their role in 1848 as 'outposts of Tsardom'.

Certain aspects of Engels's thinking were evidently as embarrassing to Lenin as they are to some present-day translators.

It is pointless to speculate about 'what Engels really meant'. It is interesting, though, to distinguish between what he said in public and what he said in private about Poland.

While publicly crying up the heroic Poles and including them in the club of 'historic' nations,

Engels wrote to Marx on 23 May 1851:

'The more I think about it the more obvious it becomes to me that the Poles are *une nation foutue* [an editorial footnote translates this as 'finished nation'] who can only continue to serve a purpose until such time as Russia herself becomes caught up into the agrarian revolution. From that moment Poland will have absolutely no *raison d'être* [reason for existing] — BP] any more.'

A Marxist will, of course, consider genocide, like Poland or anything else, not abstractly but in the light of circumstances. Thus, when Soviet Russia and Turkey were allies, Karl Radek wrote an article (reproduced in the *London Communist Review*, October 1922) to explain the Turkish government's decision in 1915 for 'extermination of the whole Armenian people'.

The leaders of the Young Turks 'were drawn to this act by reason of governmental necessity. The imperialistic European powers were using the Armenians to break up the Turkish front. The Turkish leaders were faced with the questions: life or death.'

Brian Pearce
New Barnet, Herts

Stop the coming massacre of the Kurds

WORKERS' organisations throughout the world must stand up and condemn the coming massacre of the Kurdish people.

On the morning of Thursday 5 September, F-14 fighter planes took off from the Turkish base in Ankara. Their purpose was to bomb those parts of Turkish-occupied Kurdistan where the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) is based.

Turkey is recognised as a legitimate part of the UN and is also part of NATO. This despite Turkey jailing and torturing trade unionists and political activists.

Turkey has a long history of repression and war directed against the Kurdish people, along with Iran and Iraq.

At the same time as the Turkish airforce launched its attack, armed forces were marching into the Kurdish areas under Iraqi control before the Gulf War.

The purpose of the two-pronged attack from Turkey and Iraq is to annihilate sections of the Kurds who support the cause of the working class.

Another Kurdish faction is working alongside Iraqi troops against Kurds who support socialism.

US imperialism, backed by Britain, cries crocodile tears about the slaughter of innocent people only in so far as it suits the diplomatic intrigues of these powers. They said nothing about the slaughter of the marsh Arabs in the south of Iraq after the Gulf War.

The crisis of capitalism is reflected in the growing attacks upon workers' organisations throughout the world — although from a position of weakness — which manifests itself in anti-union laws, huge cuts in benefits, growing monetary instability and mass unemployment.

There must be a growing together of the world working class to fight off the attacks of worldwide capital.

Ken Singe
Dundee

Union membership

ALTHOUGH the total number of people in TUC member unions has fallen again by 1.85 per cent (much less than in 1993 or 1994) the number of women in trade unions rose by 5,200 (0.2 per cent) while the male membership fell by 3.1 per cent.

The interesting event in 1996 was that organisations which in the first place had been set up as company unions with the object of keeping real trade unions out have now been forced by the attacks from the employers to become real unions and have gone to the point of joining the TUC.

Both the Union of Halifax Staff and the Barclays Bank union, UNIFI, have joined the TUC as has the Federation of Managers and Professional Officers which has 12,000 members.

The GMB, AEEU, and MSF have lost large numbers but the TGWU seems to have nearly stemmed the tide with only a 2.4 per cent loss in 1995 — indeed, the south-east region of the union is now beginning to show a net increase each quarter.

More significantly, the printing union, GPMU, the shopworkers union, USDAW, the building workers' union, UCATT and one of the teachers' unions, NASUWT, have all increased their membership by up to 8 per cent.

Peter Gibson
Croydon

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28 September: All roads lead to Liverpool

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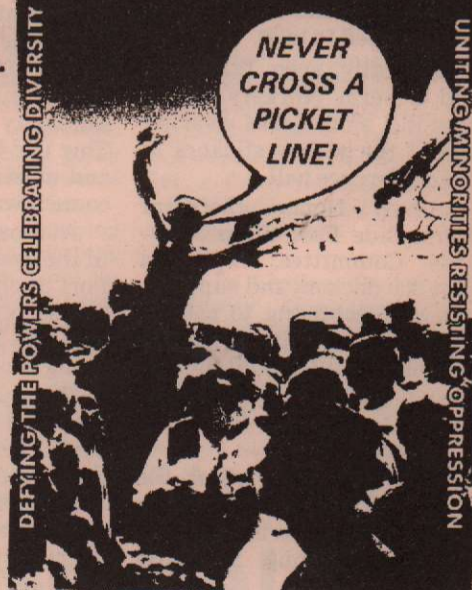
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AN EVENT UNITING DISSENT

A year ago on the 28th September 1995, the Merseyside Dockers and Harbour Company sacked 500 of their workers for not complying with "casualisation".

Since then the workers have fought back by sending delegations to international ports, and for the last year successful boycotts have been established stopping ships from using Liverpool Docks. Their 'struggle' is working outside of the constraints of the union on a grassroots level. To highlight their struggle the dockers have organised a march and rally as a big 'thank you' to Liverpool for their support.

Meanwhile Advance Party, Freedom Network, Reclaim The Streets and other grassroots groups were organising a mass carnival/action drawing on the recent successes of C.J.A. demos, R.T.S. actions, and Newbury and Shoreham protests, amongst others. Due to obstructions by Scotland Yard and the opportunity to forge new alliances the two events have now melded into what promises to be a huge collaboration to

STOP THE CLAMPDOWN and RECLAIM THE FUTURE.

*The oppression we all experience is from the same source....
....so let's resist it together!*

Labour leaders flop in Scottish play

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

'DON'T make policy like a bolt from the blue from London,' Scottish Labour's women's caucus convenor Margaret Curran warned Tony Blair last week.

Coherent figures of speech were the first casualty as the Labour leader's diktats about the Scottish devolution policy created apoplexy north of the border.

Falkirk MP Denis Canavan remarked of Scotland's Labour leaders: 'They're standing on their heads with egg on their faces.'

In 1979 Scottish devolution was the issue on which the last Labour government fell, ushering in 18 years of Thatcherism.

Labour prime minister at the time, James Callaghan, was on his last legs. The administration was exhausted by its efforts, in alliance with the trade union leaders, to balance between the demands of the working class and the instructions of the International Monetary Fund.

For Lord Callaghan, as he now is, and his colleagues the IMF in the last analysis dictated policy.

Yet it was the failure of Scots to vote decisively for Labour's Scottish Assembly plans — a failure determined more by govern-

ment unpopularity than opposition to an assembly — that dealt the death blow. The Scottish (and Welsh) devolution proposals, in the late 1970s, took up more parliamentary time than any measure since the 1930s' Government of India Bill (which began the dissolution of the British Empire).

Curran's tirade against Blair was accompanied by professions of party loyalty and commitment to a Labour government come what may, but the message was unmistakable: 'The Tories are a marginal force in Scotland. Stop running away from them!'

U-turns

The previous week, Labour had made so many U-turns in what not long ago appeared to be its only unalterable policy.

Shadow Scottish secretary George Robertson — a Blairite bureaucrat whose claim to political principle seemed based only on genuine commitment to the rapid creation of a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising pow-

ers — stood discredited if slightly pathetic.

Some weeks ago, Blair and his advisers decided the devolution commitment was vulnerable to Thatcherite Scottish Secretary of State Michael Forsyth's charge that an assembly would lead to a 'tartan tax'.

Through Robertson's oddly puppet-like mouth, Walworth Road decreed that the policy would only be implemented after a two-question referendum — firstly on the principle of an assembly and secondly on its right to vary income tax.

Since direct rejection of a Blair demand before the general election seems unthinkable to them, the outraged Labourites channelled opposition into the proposal that there should be only one question — yes or no to a tax-varying assembly.

A farcical attempt to avoid a split came two weeks ago from Scottish Labour's executive with the proposal to hold a second referendum on tax-varying after the assembly has been set up.

At first Blair welcomed this 'mature and sensible decision', which by the Monday after it had been taken was already looking crazy.

How, asked Scottish TUC assistant secretary Bill Speirs, can an argument over one or two questions end up with three questions?

Retreat

In rapid retreat, Robertson tried to justify the Scottish leadership's further reversal of policy, back to the position Blair decreed in the first place, by blaming it on the unacceptability of the two-referendums tactic to the Scottish Constitutional Convention — the cross-party body which originally devised the assembly plan.

Unfortunately Labour's Convention partners deny the need for a referendum at all, so that wouldn't wash. Between breakfast and lunchtime news appearances, Robertson spent evenings once again devouring his own words.



Scots want devolution for protection Photo: Rex Dunn

Of rats and persons

BY JOHN STEELE

SUDDENLY the Rat is respectable. Newspaper, television and radio journalists in the north of Ireland are falling over themselves in the rush to interview Billy Wright.

Wright was dubbed King Rat by police and journalists to avoid legal repercussions when they referred to those they knew were responsible for the killings of Catholics in the mid-Ulster area since 1989.

Now these journalists present his views as a legitimate tendency of 'militant loyalism'.

He has been ordered to leave the north of Ireland or be killed by the Combined Loyalist Military Command — the grandiose name for all the (presumably) lesser rats in the Ulster Volunteer Force, Ulster Defence Association and other loyalist paramilitary killer gangs.

Since 1989 Wright's mid-Ulster UVF gang have slaughtered 42 Catholics. All were innocently going about their everyday business: having a drink in a pub; watching television at home; leaving their work; visiting relations.

Nineteen-year-old Denis Carville was shot as he sat with his girlfriend in a car beside Lough Neagh. Kathleen O'Hagan, a pregnant mother of five children, was shot at her home near Omagh.

Brian Frizzel and two teenagers, Eileen Duffy, 19, and Katrina Rennie, 16, were butchered at a mobile shop in Craigmavon.

Eileen's brother commented on how the family was sickened at the way Wright was being paraded as a politician.

'It brings the whole thing up again for us and especially when we see Wright on TV being treated as a god.'

Wright's death sentence — he has refused to leave the six counties — was not ordered because the loyalist paramilitary leaders disapproved of the killing activities of the mid-Ulster UVF.

Like Wright they also operate on the basis of attempting to instil fear into the Catholic community.

The rift with Wright is about who controls the killer gangs and in what circumstances they will be used.

David Ervine and Billy Hutchinson, the 'political' leaders of the UVF in Belfast, are aware that the British government needs representatives of the UVF and the UDA in the proposed new political structures to make it more difficult for an independent movement to develop among the Protestant working class.

Last May's elections for a political forum were deliberately organised in such a way as to give the UVF and the UDA represen-

tation. Ervine and Hutchinson have developed a form of 'left-wing' populism. They call themselves socialists and have easily fooled groups like Militant Labour into sharing platforms.

As the Dublin *Sunday Tribune* (1 September) reports they are clear 'that the IRA had in effect "given up" and that Sinn Fein was prepared to agree a settlement that would keep the North within the UK'.

Wright, increasingly being manipulated by Ian Paisley, appeals for support on the basis that the British government had done a secret deal with Republicans involving eventual withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

If the UVF leadership catches up with him and administers its 'summary justice' it will not mean the end of the loyalist killer gangs. Because there is no basis for a peaceful settlement the British state will be forced to use them again.

Human nature and the aims of the Socialist Science Forum

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

A PRESENTATION on the nature of human consciousness was given by John Robinson, based on his book *The Individual & Society — A Marxist Approach to Human Psychology* to kick off the last Socialist Science Forum meeting on 4 September. John gave an account of his work on the social origin of human culture and consciousness.

Discussion followed, particularly around the important topic of the contribution of human biology and genetics. John's contribution, and the ensuing debate, will be written up in the first issue of *Socialist Science Forum Newsletter*.

This discussion will be continued further and there will be a public meeting on this topic later in the year.

A provisional statement of the aims of the forum was circulated and is reproduced below:

century faces a crisis which is a reflection of the crisis of the capitalist system itself. This is expressed in a number of ways.

The increasing domination of scientific research by commercial interests — areas of science such as biotechnology, which could afford enormous benefits to humanity — are used increasingly to impose the domination of multinational companies.

The chaos of the capitalist market is producing an environmental crisis that threatens the very existence of life itself.

University research is plunged into a crisis of funding consciously designed to encourage the domination of commercial interests.

Science is manipulated to provide an ideological justification of the measures that capitalism is obliged to impose in response to its crisis.

Biological reductionist arguments are used to provide 'proof' that human genetics are responsible for social problems. The creation and repression of a growing underclass is posed as the fault of

allegedly biologically inadequate individuals.

The casualisation of scientific work means increased job insecurity threatens to pit individual against individual.

The credibility of the scientific method is increasingly threatened by a retreat into mysticism and irrationality.

Young people seeking an alternative are drawn to beliefs that seem to provide a retreat from an increasingly threatening society.

The Socialist Science Forum asserts that the great potential of science can only be harnessed for the benefit of all humanity in the context of a socialist society. The continued domination of capital is mobilising science for a descent into barbarism.

Neither Stalinism nor social democracy [Labourism] can achieve the task of mobilising the resources of science for the benefit of humanity. A reconstruction of the socialist project is required.

of rebuilding the socialist and working-class movement. The international community of science has an important contribution to make to this task.

To this end the Socialist Science Forum commits itself to the following tasks:

■ The popularisation of science in working-class and other communities.

■ Support for those drawn into campaigns around issues such as the environment.

■ The mobilisation of scientific resources for the defence of communities under attack.

■ A fight to expose the corruption of science by capital.

■ Regular publications and public lectures and discussions.

■ Use of the most up-to-date media, such as the internet, to fight for a socialist perspective on science.

Join the strike

[The following leaflet was handed out by members of the Iranian Exile Workers Association at a number of main underground stations in London during the tube workers' strike. In all about 3,000 were handed out.]

MPs vote

26 per cent pay increase for themselves — Yes
35 hours weekly work for workers — NO

Solidarity the way forward

Support
Liverpool dock strikers against casualisation!
Hillingdon hospital strikers against 26 per cent cut!
Tube workers/strikers for 35 hours weekly work!
Postal workers/strikers for 35 hours weekly work and abandonment of 'team working'!

PROFIT

£1.5 million a day for the post office
£38 million a year for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

'Never cross a picket line'

MPs vote

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3 per cent for workers? NO!

Iranian Exile Workers' Association, PO Box 3646, London SW11 5YT.

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Worried about us

WHAT will become of the Workers Revolutionary Party and Workers Press? *Weekly Worker* (22 August), the paper of the born-again Communist Party of Great Britain, is anxious about our health and welfare, and whether members' rights are being respected.

Don Preston admits that the (otherwise admired) 'official communist' movement did 'denounce polemical and factional struggles as "Trotskyist deviationism" (or worse) (let's face it, they didn't just denounce people, they shot them), but goes on:

Unfortunately, many groups and organisations in the Trotskyist milieu also suffered from a fear of open debate, and this, combined with their extreme isolation from the working class, saw many of them become paralytic sects. One of the worst cases was the old Workers Revolutionary Party, where thuggery and intimidation directed against "dissident" members was a normal part of party culture.

Therefore, it is to be welcomed that the WRP is in the process of thoroughly discarding these old (Healyite) practices and is attempting to "open up". We discarded 'Healyite' practices — which derived from Stalinist practices — when we ousted Gerry Healy 11 years ago. It's nice of Preston to notice, however belatedly. He welcomes the Workers Press's publication of responses to our call for a new socialist party.

But he wonders if we aren't concealing differences. What about 'the WRP's sudden decision to dissolve itself'. Did everybody agree with this "liquidationist" turn?

Quoting Dave Graham's letter which asked 'What conception of socialism/communism do you advocate?', Preston says 'All these questions had to be debated fully and openly, by the entire workers' movement, not just the soon-to-be defunct WRP'. Well, so why not discuss them?

According to Preston, 'The "big dad" of all questions to be addressed in the Workers Press is whether the WRP's "new socialist party" is intended to be a rival to the SLP'. Well, that's easily answered.

Ever since the great 1984-85 miners' strike, and the WRP's expulsion of Gerry Healy and Co., with their sectarian delusions and opportunist practice, we have confronted the contradiction between the working class's objectively revolutionary character and its lack of real political expression.

The collapse of Stalinism, Labour's drift from reformism without reform into Thatcherism Mark II, the emergence of working-class and youth movements (poll tax, Timex, Liverpool) — have all exposed the inadequacy of the alternative offered by the existing 'Left' — including our own. We have been discussing all this since June 1993, for instance, *Work* said: 'We believe that a new party must now be built that will bring together all those who have been in the forefront of organising the defence of the working class against the war waged by the Tories and the Tory govern-

ment. Scargill's decision to launch this year showed things were changing. But it could hardly determine the future, announced three years ago, of the WRP is but a corollary. We did not have a blueprint. We are talking about taking our place as a party in the historical movement of the working class, not handing down the baton to workers must take-over. The issues continue to be clarified in the process, not only of the WRP, but of working-class struggles. The CPGB comrades have a point to make on this, let's hear it.

Charlie Pottins

The Moscow Trials

Glaring inconsistencies

In August 1936, the former president of the Communist International, Grigori Zinoviev, fellow old Bolshevik and politburo member Lev Kamenev, and others, were brought to trial in Moscow, accused of having plotted the assassination of Leningrad party leader S. Kirov, as part of a terrorist conspiracy masterminded by the exiled Leon Trotsky.

It was the start of a series of show trials in which leading communists confessed to the most heinous and bizarre plots, and were executed. There were glaring inconsistencies, contradictions, and howlers in the evidence.

Trotsky was alleged to have had dealings with the Gestapo in 1931 — two years before the Nazis took power. Conspirators were said to have met in a Hotel Bristol in Copenhagen — destroyed years before in a fire.

People named as targets in the

first trial were charged as conspirators before the end. Former NKVD secret police chief Yagoda was himself arrested and shot in 1938.

None of this troubled state prosecutor Vyshinsky, an old Menshevik, who declared that Trotsky had 'always been an agent of reaction'; nor was it too much to swallow for the leaders of the British Communist Party. Not only did they insist the trials were genuine, they called for the same thing here.

'It is for the working class of Britain to deal with those who in this country constitute themselves the defenders of the Trotskyites and thereby assist fascism and strike a blow at socialism all over the world' (*Daily Worker*, 25 January 1936).

'Trotskyism is now revealed as an ancillary of fascism . . . The ILP is in great danger of falling into the hands of Trotskyists and becoming a wing of fascism. Let the members of the ILP look to

it' (*R. Page Arnot in Labour Monthly*, October 1936).

More than half the members of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee, and six out of seven of its 1924 politburo, were sent to their deaths. The seventh was Joseph Stalin. The Red Army's command was literally decimated, to the delight of Nazi Germany, and with drastic consequences five years later.

The bloodbath included foreign Communist Parties whose leaders were in the Soviet Union. Stalin's murder machine extended it to Spain, and in 1940 to Mexico, when the assassin Mercader struck down Leon Trotsky. The Stalinists here continued to lie for their idol. Some still do. But as Trotsky wrote in 1937:

'These apologists for Stalin will one day regret their hasty zeal, for truth, breaking a path through every obstacle, will carry away many reputations.'



Trotsky (front) with (left) Natalia Sedova, Reba Kahllo and Jean van Hecke

Russian presidential elections 1996

Vote AGAINST ALL or lose

This leaflet was published jointly by Trotskyists and anarchists in Moscow, and several thousand copies were distributed in the days prior to the second round of the Russian presidential election on 3 July.

It calls for a vote against both candidates. It should be noted that in Russia there is a specific provision on the ballot paper for a vote **AGAINST ALL**, enabling voters to register hostility to all candidates rather than simply abstaining.

In the second round of the presidential election, the vote was 54 per cent for Boris Yeltsin, 41 per cent for Gennady Zyuganov and 5 per cent Against Both.

The title of the leaflet parodies the slogan 'Vote . . . Or Lose Out!', used in a publicity campaign by the central electoral commission aimed at encouraging young people, in particular, to vote.

This same message was repeated not only in Yeltsin's campaign propaganda but also in TV, radio and newspaper coverage, which was overwhelmingly and openly biased against Zyuganov. The president's camp believed that Zyuganov's supporters were far more likely to vote than Yeltsin's, and that a poor turnout was the greatest danger.

THE second round of the presidential elections is coming up. But what is there to choose from? Don't go to the polling booth without thoroughly looking into it all.

Both Yeltsin and Zyuganov make many promises — above all, that life will get better if you vote for them. But how can these promises be believed?

Yeltsin has already shown what he is capable of. The results of his 'wise leadership' are there for all to see: the former and present-day bosses, industrial directors and 'new rich' parasites grow fatter — while those whose labour is the basis of these people's appropriated wealth are forced to sit in factories where production has stopped, not having seen a pay packet for months, or to think up humiliating ways of earning money 'on the side'.

Yeltsin claims that there are goods in the shops and kiosks. But what is the use of that, if millions of workers — labourers, engineers, technical staff — cannot afford even basic necessities?

This doesn't worry Yeltsin, of course — the main thing for him is that the 'master' has all he needs. And this is Yeltsin's 'stability', which we are being asked to accept for another four years.

And what can we expect from Zyuganov, the dyed-in-the-wool party apparatchik who has spent his whole life in charge of 'ideology'? Or from his collaborators, ageing dinosaurs from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), who dream of the 'grand old times', when they possessed unlimited power and privileges?

Zyuganov promises to bring social justice, to secure for all the sort of living standards they deserve. But how can he do that, if at the same time the Communist Party of the Russian Federation [of which Zyuganov is the leader] and the 'popular patriotic' bloc [made up of

nationalist and Stalinist parties who supported Zyuganov's candidacy] try with all their might to please 'national capital', and try to convince us that workers have just the same interests as the managers, 'Russian entrepreneurs' and military commanders?!

What kind of unity can there be between workers, who can barely make ends meet, and managers who are building their villas and raking in ill-gotten millions? If you are for one, that means you are against the other. There's no third way. And it is clear whose side Zyuganov is on.

Someone who so publicly praises Stalin, Stolypin and Tsar Alexandr III can hardly be on the working people's side. [Pyotr Stolypin was Tsar Nicholas II's prime minister from 1906-11, in the period of reaction after the 1905 revolution; Alexandr III ruled Russia, tyrannically, from 1881 to 1894.]

Nomenklatura

It is enough to read the programmatic statements of Yeltsin and Zyuganov to be convinced that they have a thousand times more similarities than differences. This is only natural: both of them come from the nomenklatura, both of them serve the 'masters of our lives'. The differences between them are really nuances.

The war in Chechnya gives us the clearest example. This bloody conflict, unleashed by Yeltsin at the behest of the oil monopolies and the military mafia, has already taken the lives of tens of thousands — Chechen citizens and Russian soldiers. Yeltsin is a murderer. To vote for him is to vote for murder, to bloody one's own hands.

But Zyuganov, too — as is shown by the policy of his party's fraction in the Duma [parliament] — is FOR the war. More than that: the 'communists' blame Yeltsin for 'starting the

war too late' and 'not waging it decisively enough'. And no wonder.

There is hardly a party in the world, excluding the Nazis, which has such a rich experience of mass butchery as the CPSU! Those who vote for Zyuganov must remember that they are also voting for a potential murderer, who justifies genocide and proclaims himself the continuator of Stalinist butchery.

Therefore:

In voting for Yeltsin, you vote for the bosses to have a fine life and to go on treating the people like dirt, for the death of more tens of thousands of people in a senseless and criminal war. You vote for the power of the bourgeois nomenklatura and against the rights of working people.

In voting for Zyuganov, you vote for the same thing, just cooked up with a different sauce.

IS IT WORTH MAKING A CHOICE BETWEEN PLAGUE AND CHOLERA?

IF YOU THINK IT ISN'T, VOTE AGAINST ALL, VOTE AGAINST BOTH CANDIDATES.

A vote against both these demagogues will show that the working people have had enough of the arbitrary rule of uncontrollable presidents, General Secretaries and tsars, be they 'communist' or capitalist.

That the people will not voluntarily carry on their backs any cliques of parasites who care only for those with power and wealth. That the working people themselves — without a bloated, rotten, bureaucratic pyramid above them — are capable of taking control of the course of social change.

No one will solve our problems, except ourselves. No one knows the requirements and problems of industry better than those who work in it. No one can better solve the problems in the regions and districts, and in the whole country, than assemblies of representatives from the factory workers' collectives, the

, contradictions, and howlers

'A frightful disaster'



(left to right) Diego Rivera, Hansens, André Breton, Frida Kijenoort

The French surrealist poet André Breton had joined the Communist Party in 1925, but he refused to go along with Stalinism in the 1930s, and breaking with many of his friends, turned to the Trotskyist movement.

On 3 September 1936, Breton spoke at a meeting at the Salle Wagram in Paris, on 'The Truth about the Moscow Trial'.

Comrades,

In our simple capacity as intellectuals we will declare that we hold the Moscow verdict and its execution as abominable and unforgivable.

We are with you in formally denying the basis of the accusation, which the accused's history is enough to make us question, in spite of the pretended 'confessions' of most of them.

We regard the staging of the Moscow trial as a despicable police frame-up, far surpassing the Reichstag fire trial in its scope and significance. We think that such operations forever discredit a regime.

We associate ourselves, if not with all his political appraisals, at least with the lucid conclusions of Otto Bauer set out the day before yesterday in *Le Populaire*:

'What has happened in Moscow is more than an error, more than a crime, it is a frightful disaster which strikes at socialism all over the world, without distinction of outlook or tendency.'

It is, to our mind, a frightful disaster in so far as, for the first time, for a great number of comrades who let themselves be misled, revolutionary conscience as a whole is presented as corruptible.

It is a frightful disaster in the sense where men towards whom, in spite of everything, if only because of their more or less glorious past, our respect goes, stand up to condemn themselves and describe themselves as traitors and dogs.

These men, whatever serious reservations we might have on the soundness of certain among them, we hold to be totally incapable, be it in the desire to continue to struggle, or still less with the hope of escaping death, to denounce themselves, to brand themselves like this.

But this ceases to be a frightful disaster from the moment when it enlightens us definitely as to the personality of Stalin: the individual who is going this far is the big negater and principal enemy of the proletarian revolution. We must combat him with all our strength. We must see in him the principle forger of today — he doesn't only try to falsify the significance of men, but to distort history — and is the most inexcusable of assassins.

Defence

We must qualify, in these conditions, the maintenance of the slogan 'defence of the USSR'. We demand that it should be replaced, with all urgency, by that of 'Defence of revolutionary Spain', in specifying that all our attention must go today, 3 September 1936, to the magnificent revolutionary elements of the CNT, the FAI, and the POUM, who struggle, indivisibly in our eyes, on the Irun front, and in the rest of Spain.

We are under no illusion that Stalin and his acolytes, who have made an assistance pact with the capitalist states, have dedicated themselves in whatever way they can to divide these elements.

That is all the more reason for us to pay attention to them, to their

forces and their heroism, together with re-establishing the historic truth trampled underfoot no less systematically in the USSR than in Italy or Germany.

In concrete form, we propose to agitate inside the Committee of Intellectual Vigilance for the rigorous investigation demanded by the POI to be launched into the conditions in which the Moscow trial unfolded, as we already know, without the slightest regard either for the personality of the accused or for the safeguarding of human dignity.

And to help demand, if it takes

place — it must take place — reparation in the name of international conscience, the sole condition of its progress.

Comrades, we are enough of us here to hold these decisions as sacred. We salute anew the personality, above all suspicion, of Leon Trotsky. We demand for him the right to live in Norway and in France. We salute this man who has been for us, leaving aside his opinions, not always infallible, that he has been able to formulate, an intellectual and moral guide of the first order, and whose life, since it is menaced, is as precious to us as our own.

launch the International Brigades in November 1936.

Notes

Otto Bauer: leader of Austrian Social Democrat party, prominent 'Austro-Marxist' theoretician, and leading figure in Second International.

Le Populaire: French Socialist Party newspaper.

Spanish Republic: When General Franco launched his right-wing rebellion in July 1936, the Soviet government, bound by its pact with France, whose Popular Front government had Communist Party support, adhered to the Non-Intervention policy.

The British and French governments blocked supplies to the Spanish Republic, while Hitler and Mussolini sent arms, troops and planes to help Franco.

Workers and communists from several countries went to fight in Spain, joining workers' militias, before the Comintern decided to

CNT: Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo — Anarcho-Syndicalist trade union federation, Spain's largest union federation at outbreak of civil war.

FAI: Federacion Anarquista Iberica — Anarchist organisation, political influence in CNT. Its left-wing was led by Buenaventura Durruti, who died leading militias in defence of Madrid.

POUM: Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista, centrist party formed by merger of Andres Nin's Left Communists and Maurin's Workers and Peasant's bloc. Nin, a former member of Trotsky's international Left Opposition, became briefly justice minister in Catalonia, but was arrested and murdered by the Stalinists.

POI: Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste — French section of the Fourth International.

...e out!



Boris Yeltsin

offices, the educational institutes — that is, people whom we know and trust.

Instead of this, they palm us off with elections for the position of a dictator responsible to no one, a 'choice' between two representatives of one and the same system.

He who doesn't have the support of the ordinary voter is sure to suffer defeat in the end. That's clear to many people, who voted 'Against All' in the first round. The miners in Vorkuta [northern Siberia] also gave a good example: they didn't believe the hurriedly-made-up promises they were given [that their wages, owing for three months, would be paid] and have been on strike in the run-up to the elections.

There is a way to show that we are not a flock of timid sheep, but that we are citizens, people, who demand respect. That way is to go the second round of the presidential elections and vote AGAINST ALL!

Socialist Workers Union
Organising Committee of the
International Workers Party
Confederation of Revolutionary
Anarcho-Syndicalists



Audience at one of the Moscow trials

Edinburgh International Festival

Artists escaping Stalinism

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

AT THE entrance to the exhibition **Alberto Giacometti (1901-66)** — at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh until 22 September — you can see a short film of the Italian-Swiss artist sculpting in his Paris studio shortly before his death.

The craggy features, curly hair, and agitated fingers obsessively manipulating and reworking the clay, immediately make you think that you remember exactly what 'a Giacometti' is like. It is a tall, gaunt, sculpted human figure, hauntingly evocative of Belsen and Hiroshima.

The exhibition itself challenges your preconceptions. There were several Giacomettis, and it is the artist's evolution and its inspiration, even more than the excellence of his mature work in itself, that is so fascinatingly displayed in Edinburgh.

Here was one of the most complete creative figures of the 20th century. Giacometti transcended categories, drawing, painting and sculpting with mastery. Yet he feared completeness and rejected the notion that any of his work was truly finished.

Giacometti, an artist's son, came to Paris from Switzerland in 1922 to study with a pupil of Auguste Rodin. In the late 1920s — influenced by Cézanne, Brancusi and African art — he produced a series of magnificent plaque-sculptures such as *Gazing Head* (1928), in which he explored how to represent forms almost flat, as we actually see them, divorced from our experientially

and culturally acquired knowledge of dimension.

Then Giacometti became involved with André Breton and the Surrealists. He produced pieces to shock, such as *Man and Woman* (1928-29), in which 'man' is represented as a sharpened phallus about to penetrate the concave, receptive 'woman'; and *Woman With Her Throat Cut* (1932), perhaps inspired by reading about Jack the Ripper.

In the late 1930s he returned to figurative work but at first in miniature. Only after World War II did the characteristic, etiolated, Giacometti style emerge. It is these figures which seem so clearly to symbolise the huge, dehumanising political acts of the 1930s and 1940s. Yet Giacometti by then denied political inspiration.

The Edinburgh exhibition is a magnificent collection of over 200 pieces, on the whole splendidly displayed, and there is much well-researched and presented information. But Giacometti's relationship to the political history of the 20th century is tackled only obliquely — principally in a catalogue contribution on 'Giacometti: Artist and Revolutionary'.

How could art which looks so specific to a particular period of political history — the post-Nazi, late-Stalinist, 'Cold War' era — have been produced by an artist who had consciously turned his back on politics?

The question seems all the more relevant in the light of another Edinburgh exhibition, **Reckoning With the Past: Contemporary Chinese Painting** (The Fruitmarket Gallery until

28 September, moving to Aberdeen in December). It could not be more different from the Giacometti show; but in Edinburgh it is stimulatingly juxtaposed to it.

Giacometti's attitude to politics must be seen in the context of the impact on artists of the Russian revolution and the Stalinist perversion of it, and of Marxism. For not the least of the ideological crimes of Stalinism was that it cut off creative people who wanted to contribute to the fight for socialism from a serious discussion of vital questions concerning the relationship between artistic creativity and political action.

And if the work at the Fruitmarket Gallery has a collective identity, it lies in a communal wrestling on the relationships between the legacy of Stalinism, as its Asian form collapses, the meaning of the much-trumpeted 'triumph of the West', and Chinese history and tradition. The pictures here nearly all post-date the brutal repressions in 1989 in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. (The young artists, incidentally, come from Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as China itself — but the evidence of their paintings alone would be inadequate to reveal which painter is from where.)

The pictures range from Feng Mengbo's pop-art, video-game *Streetfighter* series to the ruthlessly defaced, fading delicacy of Mao Lizi's *Vandalised Murals*, which include a *Buddha* daubed with mauve paint.

Liu Dahong's meticulously detailed canvasses echo European artists as far apart in time as Hieronymus Bosch and René Magritte. They show a surreal urban existence in which, for example, an aircraft, which has metamorphosed into a strange, fish-tailed creature with an air-hostess's head, flies over high-rise office blocks and a river crowded with traditional sailing vessels.

Wang Xingwei's striking *The Road to An-yuan* at the same time parodies a propagandist poster from 1968 (*Chairman Mao goes to An-yuan*), and ironically echoes the early 19th-century German romanticism of Caspar David Friedrich. And in Zhang Xiagang's appealing *Comrades* series, portraits which look like simplified, subtly tinted, black-and-white photographs stare at you almost without expression — demanding that you don't simply move away and return complacently to your own immediate concerns.

What links the Giacometti and the Chinese exhibitions is the sense they convey of unanswered questions arising from the two central political events of the 20th century, the Russian and the Chinese revolutions. In 1932 Giacometti attempted some directly political art — represented in Edinburgh by one of a series of five drawings, *Massacre of the Workers*.

About this time he also made a socialist realist sculpture of a militant proletarian fighter, which he destroyed. During the next period he both associated

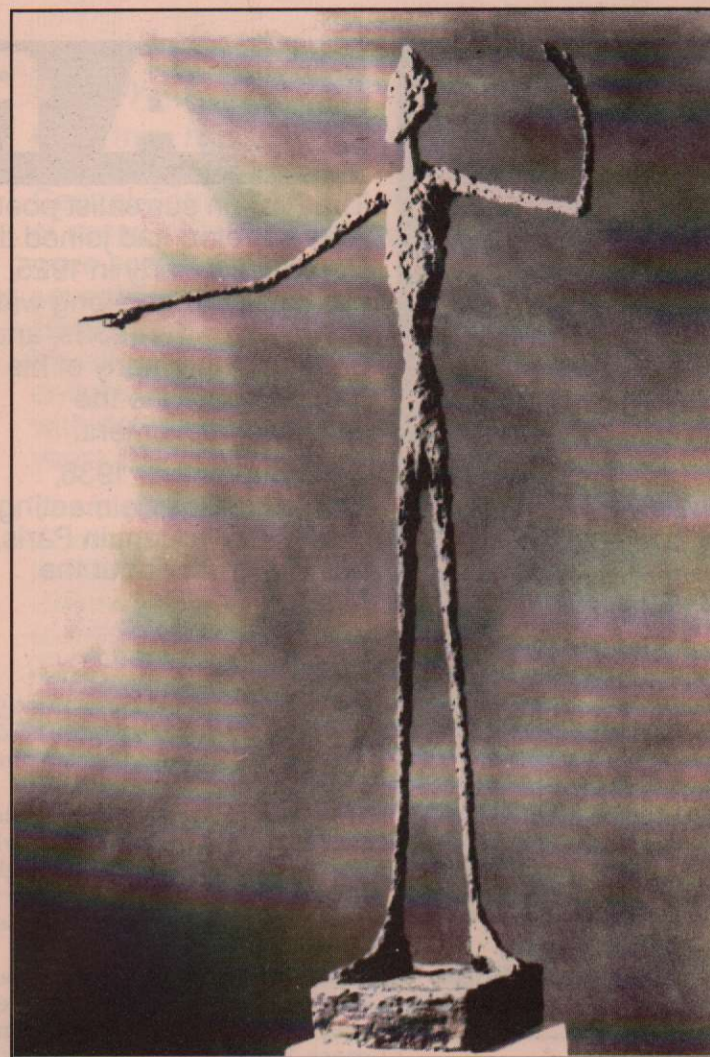
himself with the leading French intellectual, Louis Aragon, by then committed to Stalinism but also under state attack for his 'subversive' writing, and Breton, who, although sympathetic to Trotsky, sought to maintain a unity of artists supportive of communism.

From these experiences, Giacometti — personally always a somewhat isolated figure — increasingly seems to have drawn the conclusion that the artist's commitment should be exclusively to his art. He appears to have withdrawn from the political arena, and never to have returned to the interconnected questions of the relationship between revolutionary art, revolutionary politics, and the struggle between Stalinism and Trotskyism.

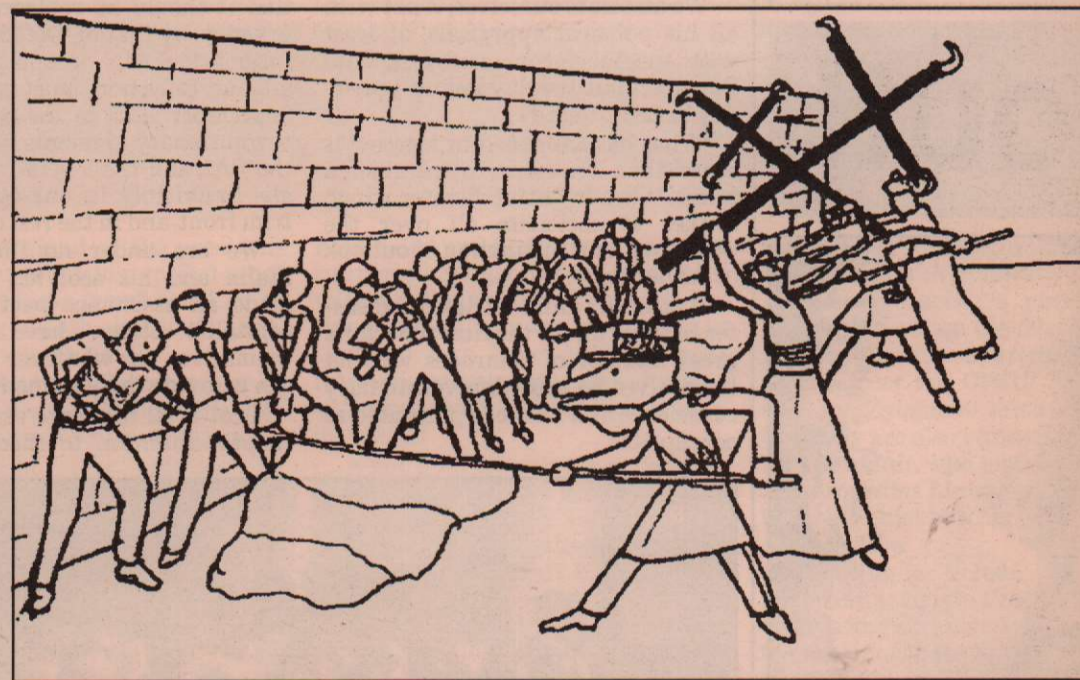
Yet his work remained inherently reflective of the political struggle of his times. And it lives for us now, demanding that we penetrate more profoundly into the history of our century.

It also helps us to better understand the young, and only recently exported, Chinese painters whose work — eclectically and perhaps reluctantly, but insistently — wrestles with the idea that only if the past is understood and consciously transcended can a future, meaningful in terms of human need, be born.

■ From mid-October the Giacometti exhibition can be seen at the Royal Academy in London.



Giacometti's *L'Homme au Doigt* ('Pointing Man', 1947)



Massacre d'Ouvriers ('Massacre of the Workers', 1932), political art by Giacometti

Film review

Here comes the cosmic cavalry!

INDEPENDENCE DAY is a film about American military domination. Even an alien invasion can only be dealt with by US military power and leadership.

US science fiction films of the 1950s and 1960s that dealt with extra-terrestrial invasion were often thought to be metaphors for the alleged threat of 'Communism', and particularly the war hysteria whipped up to convince Americans that the USSR was about to invade their cities.

Now the Soviet Union has gone, the myth that American power defends the global system from such 'threats' has gone into crisis. Hence the need to identify new 'dangers' such as Iran, Iraq or Libya. The opposition these regimes show to the US's domination is still a potent threat to its Middle East oil interests. The fear of new threats to US economic and military domination still engages imperialist minds, and culture — including cinema.

The alien invasion can then be seen as a metaphor for future threats that US imperialism knows will rise to its global system of exploitation. And it insists on its primary role in leading this struggle.

Japan and Europe may challenge US power economically, but the latter still has the military power that underpins the world capitalist system.

Liberal ideas of accommodating others are swept aside in the film — only the toughest response can deal with such threats.

The contrast of these invading extra-terrestrials with the friendly aliens of *ET* and *Close Encounters* speaks much about the growing mood of paranoia in the US as it enters an era of growing uncertainties. The film is full of rampant Stars and Stripes jingoism.

As an amusing aside the paranoia of the US far right militias will be deliciously fed by *Independence Day*. A favourite ultraright fantasy is that the US government is planning a military coup in preparation for imposing a world government. The justification for the coup, in this fantasy scenario, is the threat

of extra-terrestrial invasion, which will be carefully faked.

No doubt believers in this tosh will see this film as part of the softening up process!

But to get back to the film — for those addicted to SciFi blockbusters (like the reviewer) this is the genre at its best. The special effects are brilliant. US audiences cheered at the site of the White House being blown apart. City after city is spectacularly reduced to rubble as an invading fleet of gigantic UFOs mount an attack on earth designed to eliminate all human life.

The world is saved, as in all such US films, by the actions of a few heroic individuals. The concept of mass movements acting successfully is largely taboo in US cinema (unlike in Europe).

The procedure used to disable the alien ships is absurdly unrealistic. This is typical of *Independence Day*, most of which is technically ludicrous. But that does not detract from the excitement of the film and its spectacular special effects.

Go and see it, but reflect on what it has to say about US preoccupations with military domination.

Daniel Robertson



Comrades No. 1 (1996), Zhang Xiaogang

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The crisis of capitalism and the tasks of trade unions

an international workers' conference

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The need for a new socialist party

We are joining YOU!

Discussion at the steering committee meeting on 3 September was opened by GEOFF PILLING, member of the WRP's central committee. We publish what he said as part of the written discussion. Dave Graham from Liverpool, whose letter we published on 17 August, may think it goes some way to answering the questions he put to the WRP

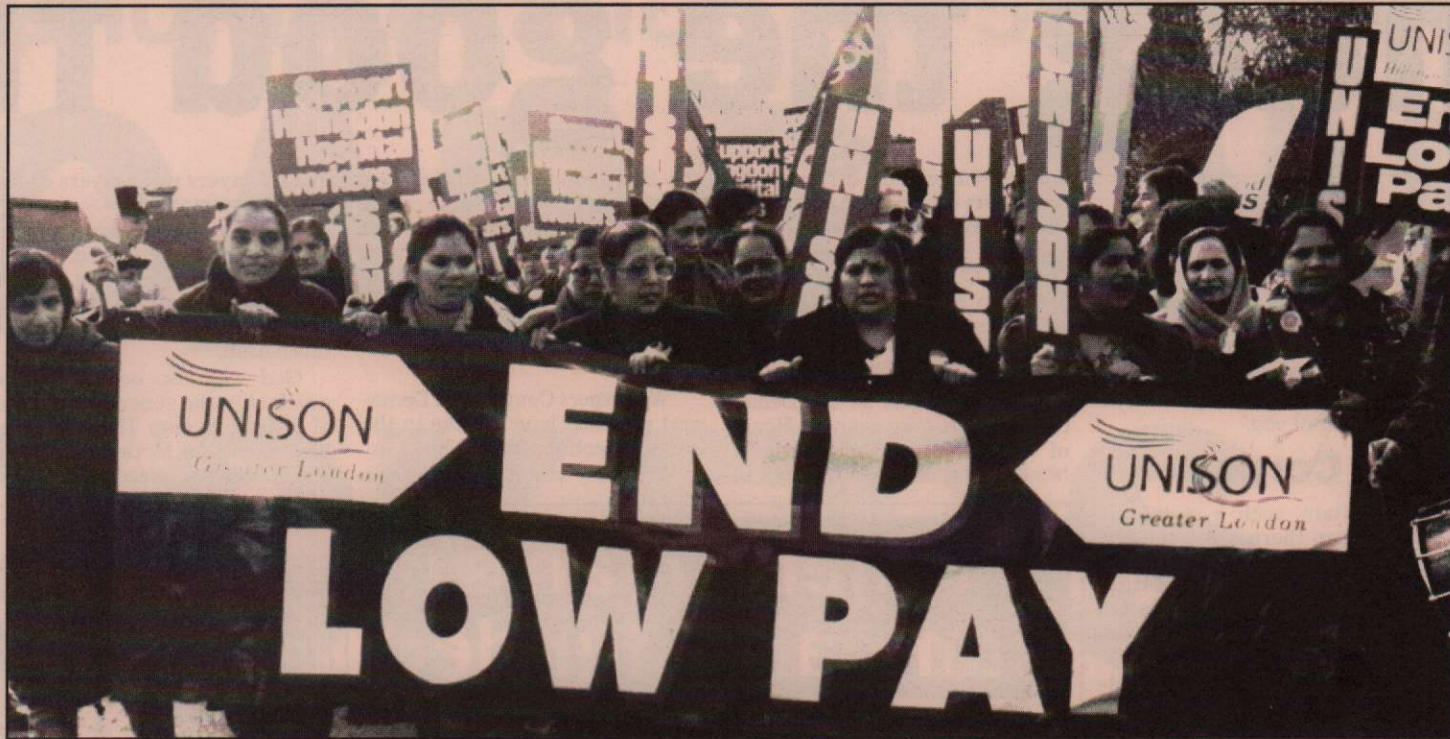
AT EACH of these meetings it is necessary to go over briefly what we are trying to do in them. The majority here tonight were present at the 16 March 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference which considered the proposal for the new party. There was a decision to reconvene that conference and in the meantime a steering committee was set up.

The WRP has now made a proposal for a transitional organisation towards a new party. We have had a number of discussions and it is clear there is still some confusion.

The proposal does not mean opening up the WRP to more members — it means that the WRP will no longer exist and its resources will be for the new organisation.

That this is not understood is evidenced by the questions we in the WRP are asked. Comrades say 'what does the WRP propose to do about such-and-such' and 'what

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



Demonstration in support of the Hillingdon hospital workers now almost a year out on strike

does the WRP think about such-and-such'.

Of course comrades should ask any questions they want, but it is very important that the step we are taking should be understood — we are joining you! Probably the best way to understand it is by asking the question: 'Do you think the WRP is a barrier to what we must do?' The answer is yes.

I'm not talking about 'democracy' — we're not saying that our members will join with anybody. What we have to understand is that a new stage has opened up.

Gone are the days when Marxists had little say in the workers' movement. The collapse of the regimes in the former USSR and the collapse of social democracy have opened up an unprecedented possibility to change the relationship between Marxists and the working class.

The working class needs a new party historically. Social democracy is not merely in a crisis — it no longer exists. The leaders of the Labour Party no longer prefer reforms.

Blair tells the leaders of the

Communication Workers Union off for listening to their members. Blair has broken with all the reforms that the Labour Party was associated with.

This is not a question of personalities. It is international — all the social-democratic parties in Europe are in the same position. **Reformism is now at an end.** The crisis of capitalism — so acute in Britain — means reforms are not there to be got.

In the paper this morning we saw how the French and Germans are colluding to keep the City of London out of the European system.

But above all the Stalinist bureaucracy no longer exists. Even in a country like Britain it played an important role. That has now gone.

In the WRP we have looked at many questions over the past few years. For example the party as a vanguard and the vanguard of the working class.

It is the job of Marxists to win the vanguard of the working class. I mean — it is the task of a truly revolutionary party to understand that the working

class is a class that helps itself and it is the task of Marxists to get into that working class among those helping themselves.

The main thing to understand is that it is not a question of getting everything clear and right and then taking it into the working class. The revolutionary party must be in the working class not pontificating about the problems but participating in the work of solving these problems. If not it deserves to die.

Groups

We have turned our face against just getting all the left groups together — that must mean putting the group above the class. The groups will act in their own interests.

But the interests of Marxists are not separate from the interests of the working class. In workers' disputes the groups can be seen telling workers what to do. We have tried consciously to overcome and negate this method so prevalent among the groups.

As I said earlier, the WRP has

initiated the process of forming a transitional organisation — the purpose is to join with others in a similar position to form the organisation fighting for a new party.

Of course we understand that comrades who see the need for the working class to have its own, new party and want to work for that will want to know more about the thinking which has led to us taking the decision to wind up the WRP.

We have decided to put on a series of lectures in October/November to try to deepen our understanding of the tasks of Marxists — what this new organisation is about. These are:

- Tasks of the party — collapse of Stalinism.
- Structural crisis of capital and end of reformism.
- The party and the working class.
- What must be done now.

We are accused of being liquidationist. Some say that the new organisation will just be an amorphous group.

Of course there are dangers,

mass of active trade unionists and those active on the left as an irrelevance.

The appeal to 'new forces' to fill the ranks of such a party — with their own agendas and priorities catered for, while we provide the Marxism presumably — is grasping at straws.

The need is for a determined turn to the working class and in particular the most class-conscious elements. These are in and will be attracted to the SLP. (The Militant-sponsored Socialist Alliance appears to have been dropped by Militant itself, at least south of the Scottish border, and will almost inevitably continue as discussion and/or support groups.)

Our aim should be to enter the SLP when the WRP is dissolved and we should publicly announce our intention of doing so as soon as possible. We should state quite unequivocally that we would expect our members and supporters to enter the SLP as individual members and fight to build it into the sort of party the working class is going to need in the coming period of struggle under a new Labour government.

We would enter discussions immediately with the leadership of the SLP about Workers Press becoming the paper of the SLP and about one of our leading members being co-opted onto their committee. These should not however be in any way pre-conditions for our entry into the SLP.

Our aims in the SLP would be firstly to fight to make it a more open organisation along with

but the alternative is to disintegrate and disappear. How do we overcome this?

Certainly not by proclaiming that the organisation must be Marxist, or by insisting that everybody in it must be a Marxist.

Above all a Marxist organisation is identified by its programme and what its relation is to the working class. It sees itself as the advanced party of the working class, organising the working class within the struggles, not over and above the working class.

There was a discussion at the last meeting about whether 'Marxist' should be included in the name of the organisation.

Title

Personally, I don't think it is necessary to have 'Marxist' in the title. An organisation is not Marxist by proclamation and neither is it necessary that everybody in it is a Marxist.

The most important thing is to establish the character of the organisation.

Was the Bolshevik Party Marxist? Yes, but not every individual in it was a Marxist. The main thing is how we work in the working class.

This steering committee should prepare for the recall conference and draw as many as possible into that preparation. There must be proposals about how the organisation will be run, its resources, its premises, its paper.

All these things must be considered, and this preparation is not just a question of organising for the conference. Part of the preparation must be in consciously taking a stand and taking part in the main questions — particularly in support of the dockers, the Hillingdon workers, the struggle of refugee workers etc.

■ NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING: Wednesday 9 October, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Holborn tube.

The Matthew Harding disease

THE £1 million donated by Chelsea FC's Matthew Harding to Labour shows the growing confidence that businessmen have in Tony Blair and his cohorts being voted in to No.10. Why is this?

The answer must be sought in the long-term decline of Britain as a world power starting from the mid-19th century.

Before World War I, the Second International organised the social-democratic parties of Europe and America and included the British Labour Party.

It pledged itself to oppose the war mongering of the imperialist powers. This international broke up when instead of fighting against their own ruling class, the national parties fought alongside their national bourgeoisies against workers of other countries in the carnage of World War I.

Although the German party, the SPD, still claimed to be Marxist, it became openly reformist, like the Labour Party. This means they fought for policies which would grant some concessions to a privileged layer of workers in the working class, based in the advanced capitalist countries. This was one way the ruling class divided workers for so long.

Today Blair is the continuation of these years of betrayal fol-

We print two more personal responses to the initiative taken by the WRP towards building a new socialist party. Each week we aim to print a selection of views on this. Anybody interested in taking part in this discussion should mail, fax or e-mail (see back page) contributions which should be 300-400 words in length.

lowing World War I. You can bet that whatever goes into Labour's manifesto, none of it will challenge capital's rule throughout the world. The anti-working-class agenda of Blair will be determined by capital's interests. It will almost certainly include:

- abandonment of the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty;
- cuts in benefit;
- retention of the privatised industries;
- no measures to help the homeless, especially asylum seekers, who have had their benefits cut;
- no nationalisation;
- no interference in the activities of the banks and financial institutions;
- no attempts to tackle the fat cats of industry or their massive and obscene salaries;
- the use of police against striking workers or those attempting to fight for their rights.

Contrast these activities of Blair with that of Karl Marx who worked at the high point of British capitalism. Marx in his time led the First International, the International Working-men's Association, in the interests of the working class. Tony Blair seeks the votes of working people in the interests of capital.

As Blair pushes Labour to become like the US Democratic Party, it is good news that an organisation seeking to bring together Marxists for a new party of the working class is proposed to be formed in November. It will hopefully include those repelled by Blairism.

Growing numbers will be looking for new political direction in the near future. The new organisation should provide the policies and ideas to attract working-class militants.

Ken Singer Dundee

Join the Socialist Labour Party

THE resolution passed at the WRP congress was a first faltering step in the right direction. But the winding up of the WRP as presently constituted — only to replace it with the same organisation under a different name — will not help us to reach out to and embrace the mass movement or prepare ourselves politically and practically for a new turn in the situation after the election of

a Labour government. The collapse of Stalinism and the rightwards tack of Labour are producing currents and realignments which it would be folly to belittle and ignore.

The most notable of these is the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). Formed by a group of Labour and trade union lefts, Stalinists and ex-Trotskyists, it has already attracted a significant number of recruits (1,400 by the launch conference).

Its propaganda is to the left of Old Labour on just about every major issue. It proposes to base itself on extra-parliamentary trade union struggle as well as standing in elections.

To this extent, at least, it fulfils the need — expressed in the congress document (to be published shortly) — to overcome the division between the trade union and political wings of the labour movement.

This is not to say that it is in any way a Marxist or revolutionary organisation. If the SLP can be characterised as anything, it must be as a 'centrist' organisation.

It is still hovering in its as-yet-unformed way between the classical parliamentary road of reformism and a more combative left centrism, represented by the third of the membership present at the founding conference who voted against the platform on the question of immigration controls.

For us to call for the organising of a 'new socialist party' at a conference in November and set ourselves up as 'Marxists for a New Party' will be seen by the

Mike Howgate London N21

US TUC president arrested on *Detroit News* picket 'Fighting the good fight'

IT WOULD be like TUC general secretary John Monks joining the Mersey dockers on the picket line at the Seaforth container terminal and getting himself arrested.

On Friday 1 September AFL-CIO president John J. Sweeney was arrested for blocking the *Detroit News's* entrance. The Detroit action is 13 months old with 2,000 out on strike at the *News* and the *Detroit Free Press* for contracts.

Sweeney assumed the AFL-CIO union federation presidency last year. This is the first time since then that he has been arrested. The AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer, Richard Trumka, and 19 others, including two strikers David Mills (Local 372) and Allan Lengel (Guild Local 22), joined the president on the police bus to the First Precinct station where they were ticketed and released. At least 73 others, including 50 strikers, sat on the steps and the pavement in front of the *News* building ready to be arrested. Police — complaining of transport and processing difficulties — asked the crowd to disperse peacefully. No more arrests were made.

In the crowd were members of the UAW motor workers' union 'Rapid Action Disciplined Deployment' team. The strikers support group 'Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters' was also there.

Violated

The action violated an agreement on picket line behaviour reached last month between striking unions and the National Labor Relations Board.

The *News's* front doors were blocked, although scabs were able to get in by the side garage doors that most of them use anyway.

But if such actions were continued, the papers could push for contempt proceedings and more sackings.

The strike organisers have promised more acts of civil disobedience resulting in misdemeanor arrests.

'Believe me, you're going to

BY MIKE COOKE

win and you're going to get a good contract,' Sweeney told the 700-strong rally that morning. 'This strike is the most important strike and the most important struggle we have in our country today. In no way will the labour movement fail you.'

Corner

In Britain, such a statement would mean there was a sell-out around the corner and Sweeney himself sees his job as getting fair-shares for labour within US capitalism (see 'Sweeney agonises', *Workers Press*, 15 June).

'We're willing to take whatever consequences there are,' he said. 'We're fighting the good fight.'

Another of those arrested was Al Derey, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 372 and Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions president.

'We have a new AFL-CIO that is saying we have to stand up to corporate greed,' he told the rally. 'Greed is what started this fight and we are going to use that greed against them and that starts today.'

Richard Trumka evoked the spirit of John L. Lewis leader of the 1937 Flint sit-down strike. 'Moral statements' were needed to match the newspapers' violation of labour laws.

He asked strikers and supporters to consider the question: 'Am I doing everything I can to bring about fair contracts?'

'We know the workers here are legally and morally right,' he said. 'We're going to make a statement here on these steps to let the world know we stand with you.'

Other newspaper union leaders arrested were Jack Howe of the Graphic Communication International Union Local 13, San Attard of Detroit Typographical Union Local 18 and Al Young from Teamsters Local 2040. Newspaper Guild national president Linda Foley, Metro Detroit AFL-CIO director Ed Scribner, Communication Workers of America vice-president Bill Boarman, United Steel Workers' regional director Harry E. Lester

and UAW Region 1A director Bob King were other union leaders on the police bus to the precinct.

Two political leaders — Detroit City Council President Maryann Mahaffey and US Representative John Conyers — were also arrested.

Conyers thought the strike would end sooner if the Democrats were to take over the House of Representatives and Conyers himself was to become chair of

the House Judiciary Committee. He said the strike 'came right from the desk of Newt Gingrich [the right-wing Republican House majority leader]. They [the Republicans] are for busting unions nationwide. They have a plan and this is only the beginning.'

'We suspect Conyers is a Democrat and may have a stake in the coming elections in the US!'

Mahaffey said the strike was a

loss for layers upon layers of the Detroit communities.

'It's a damper on development in this town,' she said. 'It's a damper on people being able to get jobs and go to work. We all suffer, and so does this city and this nation.'

God was also booked in the precinct in the venerable persons of Detroit Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, retired Methodist Bishop Jesse Dewitt, Readers United

founders Jeannie and Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellerman and the Central United Methodist Church's Rev. Ed Rowe.

Gumbleton declared reading scab papers to be 'evil' and Rowe challenged the more than 850 local religious leaders that had signed letters condemning the Detroit newspapers to do more.

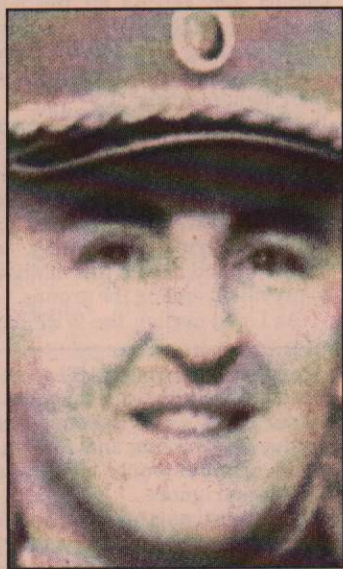
The final arrestee was Detroit Peace Action member Al Fishman.

Killer Arkan's campaign funded

SERB nationalist war criminal Arkan — who was wanted by Interpol for serious crimes even before the Bosnian war began — has been given £150,000 in European government money for election campaigning in the Serb-held areas of Bosnia.

Arkan — real name Zeljko Raznjatovic — was an operative for the Yugoslav secret police on illegal operations in Europe before he set up the militia — the so-called 'Tigers' — responsible for atrocities and robbery in Croatia and Bosnia.

His Serb Unity party is being funded by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for campaigning in the nationalist-run 'Republika Srpska'.



Arkan

In the past when Arkan campaigned for election he presented himself as a respectable but tough family man, the 'wolf protecting the sheep'.

When this failed, he shipped his wife and four children off to Italy, and threw himself into the war, taking time off to marry a second wife, patriotic pop singer Ceca Velickovic, in the full glare of publicity.

The glamorous singer, seldom off Belgrade television, appeared in a phone-in programme one day when a woman called to compliment her on her elegance. 'You have a beautiful necklace,' the caller added, 'but it seems there is a stone missing.'

Confirmed

Ceca confirmed this was true. 'Madame, you are very sharp-sighted,' the presenter commented.

The caller continued, suggesting that if they examined the back of the necklace they would find a number. They did. 'Madame, are you a clairvoyant?', asked the presenter.

'No,' the woman said, speaking slowly and carefully. 'It is the necklace of my daughter, who was murdered at... on...' and she gave the date. At this point the screen faded, and the programme did not resume.

Everybody in Serbia knows what kind of man Arkan is, but he remains a close ally of President Milosevic, whose dirty deeds he did against Bosnian and Serb opponents, and so he is protected by the regime.



Tudjman and Milosevic cuddle up

Back Croat satirists!

TRADE unionists and Bosnian solidarity campaigners will picket Croat diplomatic missions on 20 September, in solidarity with Croat journalists facing prosecution by the President Tudjman.

The editors of *Feral Tribune*, the courageous Split-based satirical weekly which has constantly upset nationalists and delighted their opponents throughout ex-Yugoslavia, go on trial on 25 September accused of slandering Tudjman.

On one occasion, exposing Tudjman's deal with Serbia's president Milosevic to carve up Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Feral Tribune* published a photo-montage depicting the two presidents in bed together.

More recently it angered Tudjman by exposing his family's business activities, and his efforts to re-write history by turning the World War II Jasenovac con-

centration site into a memorial to Croatian war dead, including Ustashe fascists.

A New York-based group, 'Neither East Nor West', has called on organisations and people concerned with media freedom to join a demonstration outside the Croatian consulate in New York on 20 September.

As well as *Feral Tribune*, it is concerned about the possible non-renewal of a licence to Radio 101, a Croat radio station that helped Tudjman get elected but is no longer in favour.

■ In London, the Bosnian Solidarity Campaign, which organised last year's non-stop picket in Whitehall after the fall of Srebrenica, and has many Croat supporters, has decided to picket the Croatian embassy, in Jermyn Street, SW1, on Friday 20 September, from 3pm-6pm. (nearest tube Green Park).

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How Bank of England helped Nazi gold snatch

SWISS bankers who held on to tons of gold salted away from Nazi plunder face demands to return it to the victims. A report released last week says £366 million of gold was taken — of which less than a quarter was ever returned to plundered countries after World War II.

The gold represented wealth taken from occupied nations and persecuted Jews, down to the fillings taken from death camp victims' teeth. At the end of the war the Allies requested £86 million be returned to countries whose people had suffered, but much less was released.

After investigations this year by the World Jewish Congress, Labour MP Greville Janner asked the British government to make a search of files held in London. Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind issued a report last week.

'The Swiss, from the report, clearly behaved in a thoroughly unworthy way during the war.

We call on them to take action now to help seek justice. The Swiss have a responsibility now.'

But the Swiss banks' role — not only in looking after Nazi plunder but in refusing to release some funds deposited by Jewish refugees before the war — is only part of a bigger picture.

The City of London is involved as much as Zurich. The Bank of England helped in Nazi plunder, continuing Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy after the 1938 Munich agreement.

Soon after Hitler's troops rolled into Prague in March 1938, the directors of the Czech national bank were ordered at gunpoint to yield up their country's \$48 million gold reserve. They said it was too late. They had moved Czechoslovakia's gold to the Swiss-based Bank of Interna-

tional Settlement (BIS), with instructions that it be forwarded to the Bank of England.

But on the same day, 15 March, British and German capitalists met in Dusseldorf and reached an agreement, one clause of which would permit Germany to spend the foreign exchange resources of countries they had occupied. By May there were reports that a German representative was in London negotiating for the Czech gold.

On 15 May, after reading an article by financial journalist Paul Einzig, Labour MP George Strauss asked Chamberlain: 'Is it true, sir, that the national treasure of Czechoslovakia is being given to Germany?'

Chamberlain denied it. But on 31 May, Associated Press reported from Switzerland that the Bank of England and Bank of Interna-

tional Settlement had completed their transaction. What had happened was that the Bank of England kept the Czech gold in London, but authorised the deduction of \$40 million from its own holdings in the BIS at Basle to go to Germany.

Later in World War II large quantities of gold were melted down and the ingots re-stamped with the Reichsbank emblem, then shipped to Switzerland to finance business transactions. Some came through the Bank of England's vaults.

Many Nazi leaders, particularly SS officers, used the same route for their own booty, so that funds were available after the war for them to set up businesses or finance neo-Nazi activity. Whoever lost the war, the big banks profited. There is clearly more to investigate.