

# TIDE OF TORY CORRUPTION

THE tide of corruption threatening to sweep the Tories out of office is rapidly getting out of control.

First Dame Shirley Porter and her gang on Westminster council are exposed for selling houses to buy Tory votes.

Next, that other Tory flagship, the London borough of Wandsworth, is accused of the same thing — but on a far bigger scale.

## Luxury

Over 19,000 of the council's 42,000 houses have been sold. Run-down estates were cleared and transformed into luxury housing developments, some with swimming pools and saunas.

Labour voters were shipped out — some of them 'sold' to towns in the north — and stock-brokers, advertising people,

and insurance brokers moved into Wandsworth. The Tory majority in the borough increased from one seat in 1986 to 35 seats by 1990.

Now opposition councillors in Brent, north London, are demanding an inquiry into similar activities by the Tory council in that borough.

■ The government is so rattled that John Selwyn Gummer, environment secretary and a fine upstanding Christian gentleman, has been forced to with-

draw a green paper that proposed to deny single mothers automatic entitlement to housing by the council.

■ Major appeared last week before the Justice Scott inquiry into arms sales to Iraq and asked us to believe that first as senior Treasury minister, then as foreign secretary, and finally as prime minister, he knew nothing about the lying and deceit involved in these sales.

## Scandal

Like Baroness Thatcher before him, Major is trying to shunt responsibility for the

scandal onto the civil servants, who, unlike Tory government ministers, do not have a right of reply to any findings of the Scott inquiry.

There is opposition aplenty to the government from the once-faithful press barons. They now doubt this corrupt and discredited government's 'ability to rule' — meaning its ability to carry through the further attacks on the working class that the crisis of capitalism requires.

They know that the large cut-backs in local government services, the attacks on education and students, and the big tax increases that are due in

April could bring massive resistance.

From the Labour Party there is no opposition to this government. Smith and company do not even demand the resignation of the Tory MP involved in the Westminster council scandal, even though the inquiry deemed him unfit to hold office in local government.

Smith does not even make what at one time would have been the ritual call for an election.

■ Instead elements in the Labour Party, such as the Surrey party last week, are calling for a pact with the Liberals.

■ And in Sheffield the Labour-controlled city council is demanding a second year of wage cuts from their workers, or it will implement massive sackings.

## Warning

This is a warning of what a future Labour government would be like.

In mobilising against the Tories, the working class must get ready to do battle with any future Labour government.

■ See 'A Labour government is not the answer', page 2; and 'Homes for votes', page 7.

## Open northern route — demands Stuttgart conference

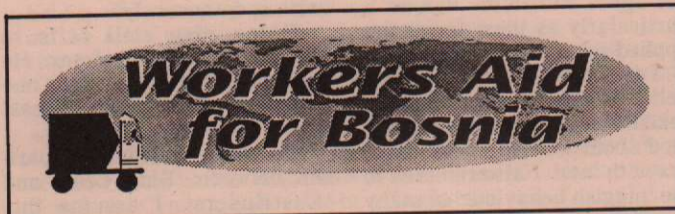
WORKERS AID for Bosnia is calling on the European trades unions to support a workers' convoy along the northern route to Tuzla.

Over 70 people were present at the campaign's meeting in Stuttgart hosted by the town's Bosnian Citizen's Club on 15-16 January.

Trades unionists and representatives of Workers Aid for Bosnia committees in Britain, France, Belgium, Sweden and Spain, together with Bosnian miners from Slovenia and members of humanitarian aid organisations in Sweden and Germany, met with Bosnians and members of the Christmas convoy team to discuss and decide on the future of the campaign to open the northern route.

## Prevented

Rade Pavlovic from Serbia, the member of Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International who first proposed organising a workers' aid convoy to Tuzla, was prevented from attending the meeting when he was stopped at the



German border.

The meeting unanimously carried the following resolution, and decided to set up commissions to deal with the organisation and finance of an all-European convoy and to work to gain the support of the trades unions (a full report will be published in next week's Workers Press):

'Fifty years on from the holocaust, racism and fascism in the form of Greater-Serbian nationalism, ethnic cleansing, and rape is now being witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

'Thousands of people, cut off from the outside world, are starving, wounded, sick, and without light and heat.

'In this situation the UN 'big powers' are using starvation as a means of forcing the people of

Bosnia and Herzegovina to accept the break-up of their country — the Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg plan.

## Condemn

'We condemn the practice, openly endorsed by the UN, to impose levies amounting to thousands of Deutschmarks on aid and relief organisations when their convoys and trucks are diverted through Serbia and Croatia.

Not only does this mean that thousands of tons of food and medical aid is held up in warehouses at rents higher than the original cost of the goods, but that the 'black market' is rife.

'This meeting therefore demands the immediate opening of the northern route through

Bosnia and Herzegovina, from Orasje [on the Croatia-Bosnia border] to Tuzla.

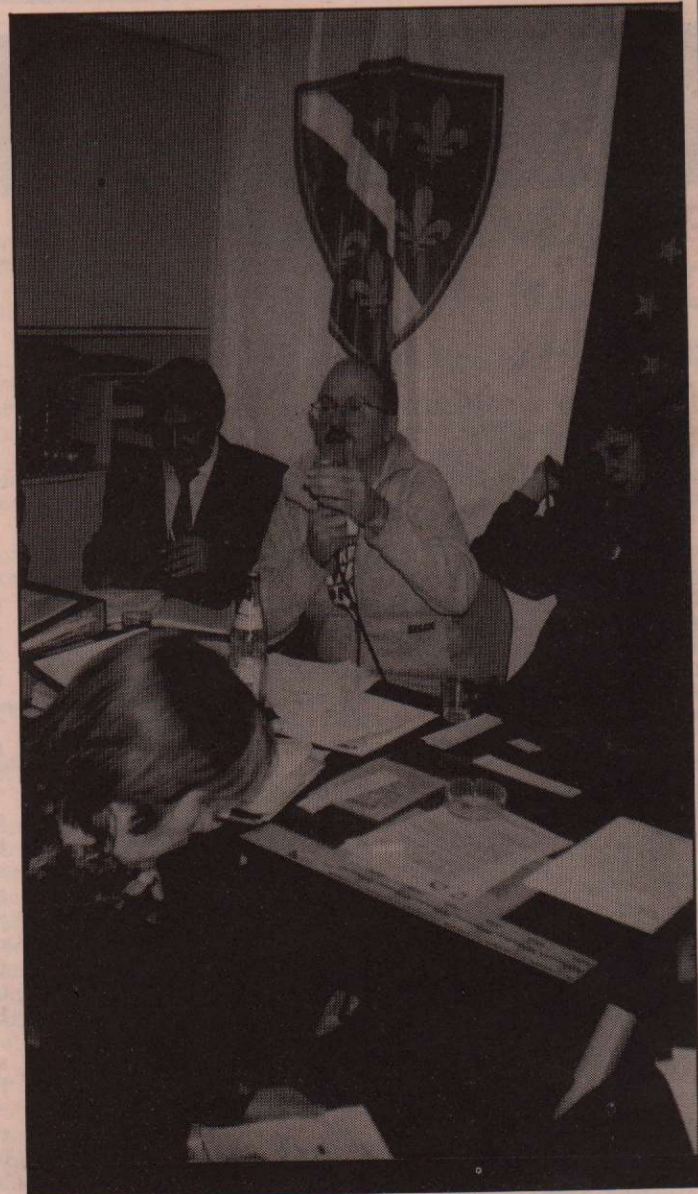
'To this end, and building on the gains of the previous Workers Aid convoys, we will now organise an all-European Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy, and invite all aid, relief organisations, and individuals to join us.

'We call upon the working class and their trades unions to rebuild the internationalism of the working class by coming to the aid of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina at this time of their great need.

## Call

'We call upon them to organise, with us, this all-European Workers Aid convoy to the Tuzla and Posavina regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

'We propose that this convoy should be organised by Workers Aid for Bosnia in collaboration with the logistic centres of Tuzla and other towns in central and north-eastern Bosnia.'



The platform at the Stuttgart conference on 15-16 January



## Workers Press

# A Labour government is not the answer

IT IS understandable that millions of ordinary people should derive considerable pleasure from the spectacle of the Tory government being exposed.

After all, for a decade and more millions have been on the receiving end of the vicious attacks launched by this government — against the trades unions, against welfare benefits, against social services, against state education, against basic democratic rights.

A government and party that for years have preached the virtues of 'family life', called for 'sound money', castigated 'fecklessness' and denounced people 'living off the state', forced tens of thousands onto the streets and condemned millions to unemployment, are now exposed for all to see as a gang of fraudulent hypocrites.

Tory ministers and MPs have made tens of thousands out of the purchase and sale of council property. Their friends in the City have made even more out of the privatisation of state industries. In the London borough of Westminster, Tory councillors have spent millions of taxpayers' money to retain control of the council at the cost of either driving thousands out of central London or denying them a roof over their heads.

And we can be sure that this fraud is just the very tip of the iceberg: the other Tory 'flagship', the London borough of Wandsworth, is already threatened with investigation by the district auditor.

\* \* \* \* \*

OVER the last few weeks, it has become fashionable among the leader writers of the Fleet Street press to suggest that this degeneration is the result of the Tories having been too long in office. Lord Acton's dictum that 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely' has been trotted out more than once.

But these are only superficial 'explanations' for the disintegration at the very heart of the Tory government. Even shallower are those who present the govern-

ment's crisis as flowing simply from the weaknesses of John Major and his associates.

The fact is that the crisis of the government constitutes a crisis for the whole of the ruling class.

Ever since Thatcher was kicked out, there has clearly been a growing crisis at the heart of the ruling class. Large sections of the establishment are convinced that Major and the gang of former estate agents, PR men, and associated City swindlers that dominate the Tory Party are not up to the job.

Thatcher was got rid of because, despite all her blustering, and despite the illusions spread by many on 'the left', she was unable to break the back of the working class. But Major and his gang have proved equally incapable of carrying out this task. Less capable, in fact.

\* \* \* \* \*

**FINANCIAL scandal is by no means unique to Britain. The same tale of rampant corruption at the very centre of government and the state bureaucracy is endemic in Japan, Germany, the US, Spain, Italy, and elsewhere.**

In many ways, the true nature of capitalism in this period is revealed by developments in the former USSR, where the mafia is the leading force in the attempted restoration of 'the market'. That this corruption appears more and more on the very surface of society is a sign of the scope and depth of capitalism's disintegration.

These developments are not simply the product of the dishonesty of individual representatives of the capitalist class.

They reflect a social system rotten to the very core. For we live not simply under the capitalist system but under imperialism, the epoch of the decline and break-up of capitalism.

From the start of this century Marxists have characterised capitalism in this epoch as a thoroughly parasitic social system. It more and more destroys its own conquests; it more and more resorts to swindling and cheating as the 'normal' way of making money.

It sees the actual production of things as something to be avoided in favour of making a quick million or two by 'insider dealing' on the stock market, by speculation, by milking state funds and the like.

More and more capitalism becomes involved in drug dealing and other criminal activities: it is well known that one reason why the capitalist class cannot contemplate the legalisation of drugs is that the international banks would lose millions and millions from their present 'laundering' activities.

Capitalism is quite unable any longer to develop the productive forces. Increasingly, advances in science and technique are used to break up the conquests of the past, to further the instruments of war, the means of destruction. More and more, countless millions are condemned to disease and starvation, even though the means for overcoming these horrors are ready to hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

**THE press has pointed out the almost total silence of the Labour Party leaders over the last weeks.**

This is due to the fact that they undoub-

tedly have sexual and financial scandals as skeletons in their own cupboard.

But again, this is a trivial explanation for the failure of John Smith and company to confront this government. The Labour leaders are reformists; they are tied hand and foot to capitalism; they accept its permanent existence. Their morals are the morals of a decadent ruling class. They have no programme to mobilise the working class against the government and have no intention of advancing one.

If the government falls, as is quite possible, it will do so as a result of its inner decay and not because of any opposition from Smith and company — who have deliberately confined themselves to a few innocuous parliamentary bleatings.

\* \* \* \* \*

**THAT is why we insist that the answer to the crisis of the ruling class is not the return of a Labour government. We say this in the knowledge that many workers still, perhaps, see in such a Labour government the only feasible alternative to the Tories at this stage.**

But any Labour government would govern in the interests of the banks and big business. It would be a government forced to continue the attacks on millions of ordinary working people, as well as on sections of the middle class.

The working class must not subordinate its interests to such a government. What the working class needs to do is unite in struggle as a class. This demands a socialist programme, one that lays the basis for the solution of the pressing problems that millions face: homelessness, unemployment, the destruction of the services on which they depend.

Around such a socialist programme must unite all those fighting against the Tory government, and against the leaders of the labour movement, whose treachery alone allows Major to remain in office.

**In this spirit, we urge everybody to attend the Unite the Struggles conference to be held in Manchester on 12 February — see details on page 3.**

## Letters

### Freud's Oedipus complex

THIS is a reply to Roger Horrocks's attacks on Peter Fryer (4 December) and John Robinson (8 January), after they had criticised Freud.

For someone claiming to 'work as a psychotherapist' (4 December), Horrocks displays an astounding ignorance of Freud. Anyone reading Freud other than superficially will know that central to Freudian theory is the so-called Oedipus complex.

This is an innate childhood sexual attraction for the parent of the opposite sex. Freud maintained that neurotic behaviour was caused by repressing this innate biological tendency from consciousness. He also maintained that neurotic behaviour was 'cured' through the patient's acceptance of the existence of the Oedipus complex. This was explained by John Robinson in his letter (11 December).

Horrocks attempts to deny this by a method that can only be described as thoroughly dishonest. In order to prove Fryer and Robinson wrong, he avoids mentioning anything Freud actually wrote.

Instead he seeks to invoke the authority of theorists such as Horney and Fromm. It should be noted that both of these theorists explicitly rejected Freud's central concept of

the innate biological Oedipus complex, as have the majority of post-Freudian psychologists.

It should further be noted that, contrary to any false impressions given by Horrocks, neither Fryer nor Robinson attacked Horney, Fromm, or anyone else who rejected Freud's concept of the innate Oedipus complex.

(Robinson attacked Freud only on the issues of the Oedipus complex and of alleged innate aggressive tendencies. He made it clear that he had reservations about Fryer's blanket condemnation of Freud.)

I would challenge Horrocks to show anything in *Freud's own writings* contradicting what I have written above regarding Freud's central concept of the innate biological Oedipus complex?

If he cannot, could he tell us whether or not he agrees with this central aspect of Freud's theory? If he does not, why does he attack Fryer and Robinson who, I repeat, never attacked anyone other than Freud?

A London reader

### Proof and reproof

I HAD expected an attack from Peter Fryer (Personal Column, 8 January) but what I found interesting was its style. He adopts a patronising and sexist

tone whilst failing to address seriously my letter.

I don't know how old Peter thinks I am, but he gives the impression of lecturing a young girl. (I was under the impression that Workers Press values the experience of young people, of whom I am, unfortunately, no longer one). I can do without such patronising arrogance, which is not to say that I don't have lessons to learn.

With regard to the 'pill of reproof . . . in a bolus of goodwill', Peter could certainly take heed of this himself, as a re-reading of his responses to Paul Henderson (quoted in his column) proves only too well!

His reply engages in the 'mud-slinging' and 'diversionary tactics' of which I am accused. My reference to his use of 'mammalian behaviour' reflected my concern at his inference that human beings exhibit sexual behaviour which is instinctive and biologically determined, not learnt within a social context. Peter has never satisfactorily answered this point (which was criticised by Paul Henderson).

My reference to 'date rape' as it certainly was used by Peter, albeit in inverted commas (6 and 27 November), and compared to its 'female equivalent' (6 November), referred to his views on what he now calls 'the behaviour of some women with men'. He now claims he was describing painful personal experiences as the column tossed out generalisations which I still reject.

Peter states that 'hysterical' is no longer a valid or psychiat-

ric term — I would like evidence of this. I would also like to understand his confidence that 'neurotic', 'psychopathic' and 'sadistic' have 'objective' meanings; anti-psychiatric writers would not agree with him. Nor do I, particularly as these terms are applied to women.

I used the term 'prick-teaser' deliberately to illustrate the sexism in the scenario he created about women saying no to sex with men. I also referred to the 'piggish behaviour' of many men to emphasise that Peter's criticisms of women's supposed sexual behaviour were not applied to men's sexual behaviour. This illustrated further his sexism.

Regarding education about lesbian and gay sexuality, Peter fails to address society's attempts to portray this form of sexuality as invisible and/or filthy. In this social climate neither children nor adults will really ask questions about it.

Peter has not addressed this matter at all, but accuses me of a 'lack of understanding of how children learn'. I doubt many 'enlightened families' exist. Certainly there is a concerted attack on this kind of enlightenment (Back to Basics, Section 28, references to lesbian/gay couples with children as 'pretend families', etc.).

Peter's reference to 'forcing unwanted information on uninterested small children' suggests two things. Firstly it sounds similar to those who argue 'I don't mind if you're gay but please don't force it down my/our throat(s)'. Secondly, although I am sure

it is educationally better to stimulate children (and adults) to ask questions than force-feed information, surely the emphasis is on *stimulating* questions not passively waiting for them to arise spontaneously?

Peter also still fails to address the nature of sex. He maintains that there is only one suitable kind of sex and the rest is merely 'recreational'.

He uses a dubious comparison between 'King Lear' and 'EastEnders'. I assume this contains a value judgement that Shakespeare (or just 'King Lear') is better than popular culture (or does he just mean 'EastEnders'?).

I understood that Shakespeare's plays certainly used to be popular culture. There have been interesting items recently in Workers Press about popular culture which put an alternative view to Peter's.

I hope that other readers of Workers Press will respond to these points. Perhaps the 'Inside left' item 'Sisters' (8 January) was one response?

Marie Critchley  
Leicester

### Correction

Charlie Pottins writes: owing to a slipped semi-colon, my review last week of Lynda LaPlante's thriller 'Comics' made an innocent witness into 'the killer'. A phrase in the penultimate paragraph should have said: '... the killer was a professional; but mixed-up comedian Johnny . . .' etc. Just shows you can't be too careful with punctuation.

WE WELCOME LETTERS

SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS,  
PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB

— OR PHONE 071-582 8882

## Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

In so far: £435.13

I'M back from the Workers Aid for Bosnia Christmas convoy to find that the fund is not doing at all well! Now I know that the period following the seasonal festivities is one of physical and financial recovery. I read little significance into the correlation between this low figure and the fact that this column has been written for the last two weeks by Geoff Pilling.

We only got £160 in last week so we've got to pull up our socks, do up our shoe laces, etc. — other clichés on a postcard please — and get the bl\*\*\*y fund in!

So turn out your pockets for any fivers hiding away, get the moths out of your friends' wallets, and send any money to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Mike Cooke

## Coming soon

WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY: Public meeting on the government's abolition of safety regulations. The meeting will take place in the Training Room, opposite Southwark Trade Union Support Unit, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17. Speakers include: John Prescott MP, Nigel Bryson (GMB), Jimmy Fitzpatrick (FBU), Kevin Barron MP, Fiona Murie (CAHIL). Nearest tube: Kennington.

SATURDAY 29 JANUARY: Bloody Sunday march for British withdrawal from Ireland. Assemble at 12 noon, Hyde Park, London (Marble Arch tube).



# Hunger used as a weapon in this dirty war

DOT GIBSON reports from Zagreb on the progress of the Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy.

THE Workers Aid for Bosnia Christmas convoy is now standing-by in Zagreb to continue its journey to Tuzla. The drivers have returned home and will go back as soon as they are needed.

Joined by 11 trucks from the Tuzla, Brcko and Gradacac Logistic Centres in Zagreb, the convoy went to Zupanja — the town on the river Sava at the start of the northern route to Tuzla — on 7 January.

Talks between representatives of the convoy and commanders of the HVO (Bosnian Croat) forces in Orasje, on the Bosnia-Herzegovina side of the river Sava, revealed that mines would have to be removed for the trucks to pass along the road.

## Anvil

The HVO forces in that region are between the hammer and the anvil. On the one hand, they are collaborating with II Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina army under the leadership of Brigadier Sadic Hazim, who gave full written permission for the Workers Aid convoy to travel safely in the area under his command. On the other hand, they take orders from Gojko Susak, the Croatian minister of defence.

It is Susak who is being consulted by HVO forces for permission to remove the mines to let the aid convoys pass. One young man from Tuzla commented:

'Susak is a man who knows only cash and not humanitarian relationships. He bought his way back into ex-Yugoslavia and the ruling party of Croatia after the break-up of the old [Stalinist] regime. Before that he had made a fortune as the

owner of a chain of beefburger bars in the US.'

Hundreds of faxes are pouring into Susak's office from Workers Aid for Bosnia committees, supporters and trades unions demanding the opening of the northern route.

At the same time, pressure for this is coming from the Bosnia-Herzegovina embassy in Zagreb and the logistic centres representing 19 towns in the Tuzla and Posavina regions (see list below).

It is understood that the Bosnia-Herzegovina army command has demanded that the HVO forces either join them as one army of a multi-ethnic country, and break their ties with the republic of Croatia, or they 'stand aside' and let the Bosnia-Herzegovina army get on with the job of beating the Greater-Serbian nationalists.

Also the representatives of the Brcko Logistic Centre in Zagreb are in discussions (in Hungary) with the Bosnian Serb forces, which occupy about 5km of the road between Orasje and Tuzla.

## Main

In these negotiations they now speak for all those who are campaigning for the opening of the northern route. The main forces in this campaign are members and supporters of Workers Aid for Bosnia and the logistic centres of 19 towns.

News from the front is that, despite their greater weaponry, the Bosnian Serb soldiers are hungry and have no moral fibre for the war. Back home their families are facing raging inflation (1,000 per cent a day!), and there are strikes by transport and local government workers and miners.

The 40 drivers of a recent convoy carrying 300 tonnes of food and other supplies destined for Tuzla were imprisoned for 12 days, and they report that the soldiers are out of the control of their high command.

These local soldiers are reported to be miserable, quarrelling, demoralised, and are interested only in self-preservation and in stealing the food for themselves.

## Huge

Despite huge sums of money being paid to Serbian authorities for this convoy to pass through their territory, and the same quantity of food as the convoy was taking to Tuzla being handed over to the Serbians, nevertheless the local sol-

diers commandeered the whole cargo.

And it is the United Nations forces that presides over and organises the use of hunger as a weapon in this dirty war. It is becoming the most hated organisation in the whole region.

Whilst the humanitarian aid convoys cannot get to their destinations, despite thousands of Deutschmarks being paid over in levies to Croatian and Serbian authorities, the 'black market' is thriving and everybody talks openly of corrupt UN forces being paid to allow this.

A Croatian bus driver explained that he was speaking for his whole family and all his friends and workmates when he told us that he wanted the UN out of his country. 'We could deal with these mentally-sick

nationalists if the UN would get out and leave us alone,' he said. 'We have been living together — Serbs, Croats and Muslims — for generations. There's not a single family that isn't a mixture of all three groups.'

## Banned

A Croatian satirical newspaper, 'Feral Tribune', with a front-page montage showing the Croatian and Serbian presidents, Tudjman and Milosevic, in bed together, sold like 'hot cakes' in Zagreb. The paper has now been banned.

The campaign for the opening of the northern route to Tuzla raises the central question of this war. It is the route which joins the central and north-eastern regions of Bosnia-

Herzegovina — the free territories — to the outside world. 'If that road is opened then we have won the war and we will have survived as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural country,' said a director of one of the logistic centres in Zagreb.

It is a very big step forward that the 19 towns have joined together with Workers Aid for Bosnia in this fight, and that the Bosnia-Herzegovina army sees this campaign as complementing its courageous stand against the Greater-Serbian nationalists.

■ The 19 towns are: Tuzla, Brcko, Gradacac, Gracanica, Kladanj, Zvornik, Vlasenica, Srebrenica, Kalesija, Celic, Teocak, Zivinice, Banovce, Lukavac, Srebrenica, Orasje, Bosanski Samac, Modrica and Janja.



Convoy members at the Croatian foreign ministry, Zagreb, on 28 Dec

## WORKERS AID FOR BOSNIA National Steering Committee meeting

5 February  
2pm-5pm

Highfields Community Centre,  
Leicester

All local groups and other interested individuals are invited to send a representative

For further details please contact: WAB, PO Box 9, Eccles SO, Salford M30 7FX. Phone: 061-707 1584 or 071-582 5462.

## Workers' unity is the key

BY ANTON MOCTONIAN

MANY battles face the working class as the destruction of the welfare state continues, and the real level of unemployment tops 4 million. In the fight for jobs and services, the working class needs to unite as a whole in Britain and internationally — a requirement becoming more obvious each day.

The struggle for this unity is at the centre of the preparations for the Community and Union

Action Campaign's conference in Manchester on Saturday 12 February.

Last Saturday, CUAC's steering committee met to organise the conference and held a wide-ranging discussion on the aims of the conference, the contents of its paper 'Unite!', and how to achieve the greatest democracy in the workers' movement.

Priya Thamoheram, head of the centre at the Highfields Youth and Community Centre in Leicester, described its fight against funding cuts and mer-

ger. He went on to explain how he and others in the community were increasingly aware of other struggles besides the fight for the centre, and described how police had recently badly beaten an Asian man in the area.

The trade union officer of a Leicester group campaigning against the Child Support Act told of his efforts to get the trades unions to fight this punitive financial attack on second families.

The 12 February conference will tackle the following:

- The lessons of the battle against pit closures and other disputes, like Timex and Burnalls;
- Privatisation of the NHS, local government, the pits, the postal service, buses and rail;
- Organisation between unions and communities to beat back the rise of the racist and fascist threat; and
- The need to involve the unemployed in the workers' movement.

Reports will be given from black groups fighting for justice.

## Nazi gang attacks bookshop

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

ELEVEN men have been charged after Nazi skinheads attacked a left-wing bookshop last Saturday, smashing windows and assaulting staff and customers. Including a disabled woman on crutches.

Hurling metal card-stands into the children's section, and trying to wreck a computer, the gang did an estimated £6,000 damage at Mushroom Books in Nottingham. Shopworker Ross Bradshaw, who was punched and kicked by three men, said most of the attackers wore 'skinhead gear', and some had swastika armbands.

'We have been going for 21 years, and we are not going to

be defeated by Nazis,' said Ross, who received hospital treatment for bruised ribs and abrasions. He was convinced the attack had been carefully planned and organised. 'In the 1930s Nazis burned books and in the '90s Nazis are again attacking bookshops.'

A gang of more than 30 right-wingers invaded Nottingham city centre on Saturday afternoon by bus.

## Popular

About a dozen of them attacked the bookshop. It is understood they had earlier gathered at the Red Lion pub, in Heanor, Derbyshire, a popular right-wing rendezvous, intending to travel to a Nazi rock concert in Essex, which was

cancelled.

Police shadowed the Nazis through the city centre, but didn't make any arrests until after the attack on Mushroom, when they stopped the bus leaving Nottingham.

It is believed police may be able to identify some of the attackers from fingerprints. A wooden club was among items left behind at the shop.

Mushroom Books specialises in black and Jewish literature, as well as labour movement publications. It has also hosted events with gay writers such as Armistead Maupin, and a Midlands BBC programme on lowering the age of consent.

In 1972 there was an arson attack on the shop, and more recently staff have received threatening letters, and phone

calls from the racist group Combat 18. But they remain defiant.

'We have been inundated with offers of help and support from customers, local traders, and others in the book trade,' Ross Bradshaw told Workers Press as he looked over damage on Monday. 'We will be open again for business tomorrow.'

## Intimidation

The bookshop would continue to support the struggle against racism, said Ross, a former Glasgow engineering worker, and author of a booklet, 'Germany Calling', on the history of the far-right in Britain. 'Our main main contribution is to continue selling the books we believe in and not give in to this intimidation.'

## UNITE THE STRUGGLES! CONFERENCE

Saturday 12 February  
11am-6pm

Manchester West Indian Centre,  
Carmoor Road,  
Chorlton-on-Medlock,  
Manchester M13 0FB.

The cost will be £5 for trades unions and trades councils, £1 for community groups and free for unwaged.

Please advise on numbers and ages of any children you are bringing so that appropriate arrangements can be made for them.

Copies of the campaign's paper, 'Unite!', can be obtained for 40p a copy; 30p a copy for orders of 20 and more. Cheques made payable to 'CUAC' should be sent to the CUAC, c/o Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre, 12-14 Thornton Street, London SW9.

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# Inside left

## Poetic and prophetic

IT WAS one of those seemingly chance ironies that reflect the real interconnected movement of history. On Saturday 15 January, dealing with the puffed-up ornamental peacocks who strut the bourgeois press decrying black and other oppressed cultures, Peter Fryer, writing in Workers Press, went on to quote Guyanese poet John Agard's lines, on the fascists who attacked black bookshops:

*Threatening letters were not enough . . .  
no they would have to get more tough  
After all to keep Britain white It's a danger  
To have a nigger  
Who can read and write . . .*

The same day, Saturday 15 January, at 3.30 in the afternoon, as customers enjoyed respite from the working week browsing in Nottingham's Mushroom Bookshop, a gang of Nazi louts stormed in, attacking people and doing as much damage as they could. Some wore Nazi swastikas, or the three-legged swastika of South Africa's neo-Nazi AWB.

Broken glass and burning books are what the defenders of racially superior culture' bring, as typical as the marks of Cain they wear with pride. Even if, in normal times, the pompous peacocks of the bourgeoisie would prefer not to be associated with the Doc Martin-booted lumpen who attack a bookshop that serves blacks, gays, Jews, and the working-class movement.

And in 'abnormal' times? As another poet, published recently by Mushroom Books, remarks:

*I've heard enough about  
Eichmann and Himmler  
Heydrich and Bormann,  
— sadistic maniacs etc. etc.  
I've heard enough about Hitler  
— cunning diplomacy, magnetic oratory etc. etc.,*

*Just tell me  
who gave them the money to start  
the thing off.*

(From 'You are, aren't you?', poems by Michael Rosen, £4.99 Mushroom Bookshop, in association with Jewish Socialist publications.)

Although some of the Nazis may be workers, the class they attack is their own, the class they serve is the enemy, which is in power. It's not only blacks whom the ruling class fears reading and writing. As Lady Bracknell said: 'What, educate the masses? Why, there'd be riots in Grosvenor Square!'

IT'S said that the Nazis who attacked Mushroom Books had gathered earlier at a pub they've used before. The same pub has reportedly been used for Ku Klux Klan meetings, and the landlord was quoted not long ago complaining that a Nazi rock concert had been cancelled after he'd ordered in extra beer. By contrast, the Becontree pub in Essex, where last Saturday's right-wing concert had been planned, cancelled when they heard who was coming.)

People who allow their premises to be used by racists and Nazis should be reminded of the risks they're taking. We Marxists oppose individual terror, and would not advocate reprisals. But such things can happen.

Certainly trades unionists who work in or deliver to premises used by Nazis and racists are entitled to think about the racists' attacks on fellow workers, including murders, as well as the fate of trades unions under fascism.

Charlie Pottins

## WORKERS AID convoy member GEORGE ANGUS gives a bitter-sweet account of some often comical experiences on the Workers Aid for Bosnia Christmas convoy that left Britain heading for the mining town of Tuzla in Bosnia. He tells the story of the journey from Stuttgart to Zagreb, which hit more than a few difficulties.

APPARENTLY a simple proposition: take six trucks to Zagreb in Croatia from Stuttgart. The reality proved to be a Kafkaesque odyssey.

Our first real problem — apart from blizzards, one truck being impounded by the German police, and getting lost in Stuttgart for four hours — was an extreme mismatch of expectations between us and the Bosnians we had met in Germany.

Their expectation: we would take 5,000 personal parcels to their loved ones in the Tuzla region.

We eventually reached an arrangement and set off from Stuttgart, led by four local Bosnians. Within 15 minutes we were on the wrong autobahn!

The local Bosnians then decided that the best thing to do was reverse the overladen trucks back down the road.

Now, in Germany they travel fast down the autobahns: how they laughed when they saw us reversing for what seemed an eternity in the pitch black and the pouring rain.

After further amusing mishaps, made more hilarious by our not sleeping for two days, we finally reached the Czech border to enter the land of Franz Kafka with his images of bureaucracy gone mad.

The Czech border guards made us wait for eight hours.

'Pay us 3,000 Deutschmarks,' they told us, 'and we'll give it back when you leave the country — honest.'

We had no choice but to pay. We went on, stopping at a truck park for two hours' badly needed sleep.

At the point of exit from the Czech Republic we asked for our money back.

### Empty

'Aha!' exclaimed the Customs man. 'You have to pick it up in the nearest town.'

Two hours later we found the 'office' — a wee room, at the end of a railway station, which was empty apart from a desk and a fridge with some cheese in it.

Eventually a man with a dog turned up to ignore us. An hour later we got our money. But because we were leaving the country immediately they gave it to us in the local currency with the promise that we could change it into Deutschmarks free of charge at the office next door.

Unlike the man from Del Monte,

the woman in the office next door replied in the negative, and we were charged £150 to carry out the exchange.

Slovakia was relatively straightforward — only an hour or so to deal with the bureaucrats. Hungary was brilliant, apart from being ripped off for another £100 at the border. (We only found this out when the Croatian authorities laughed at our paperwork, despite the fact that I had phoned all the authorities in advance.)

Driving through Hungary was amazing. We crossed a huge plain. The atmosphere was dreamlike. People went around on bikes — all very friendly and placid.

### Incredible

We stopped at sunset for a meal by an extinct volcano in the middle of the plain. At the top of the volcano was an old Turkish castle. It was incredible.

I felt so positive that I felt sure we were about to land in difficulties again. I was right.

Two in the morning: the Hungarian border officials were great — informal and friendly. I had my passport stamped and reached the Croatian entry point at 2.30am. An hour later we were told we could move.

As we entered Croatia a police officer ran out and stopped us. We were told that we had to go to Split in the south or return immediately.

On the journey our plans had changed. At first we intended to go to Zagreb and then to Zupanja, the start of the northern route into Bosnia. But we had been told to go straight to Zupanja.

In any case we would have refused to go to Split. We returned, and I got my passport stamped on re-entering Hungary. Next day we went again and I got my passport stamped — again.

This time the Croatian authorities said we had to go to Belgrade, which is of course the capital of Serbia. We refused, and they said we should contact the British embassy to get permission to go to Zupanja.

The 'official' policy of the Croatian government is to allow freedom of movement within its borders for aid convoys. So why, I asked the border guard, should we ask the British government, and why should we be forced to go to Split?

# A Kafkaesque journey

The Customs man was annoyed. We were refused entry. I had my passport stamped.

Next day, after yet another stamping of my passport, we went to the Croatian border. They have a shift system. Each time we went there were new folk who didn't know us.

'Show us the paperwork', said the official. He looked at it, said it was odd, and walked away.

We were sent back. And — you've guessed it — my passport was stamped.

Next day was Christmas Eve. We set out early. After more ritual stamping we approached the Croatian border-post. Our translator stole the Customs man's hat. The Customs man let off fireworks and I ate their Christmas cake.

### Honoured

The word came through that we could go to Zagreb, and finally they let us through.

Just to make sure we reached Zagreb and nowhere else we were honoured with a police escort. In the sky we could see tracer fire as troops celebrated Christmas.

On the way, 20km from Zagreb, a local police chief decided to stop us and ordered two police officers to search us. We objected strongly.

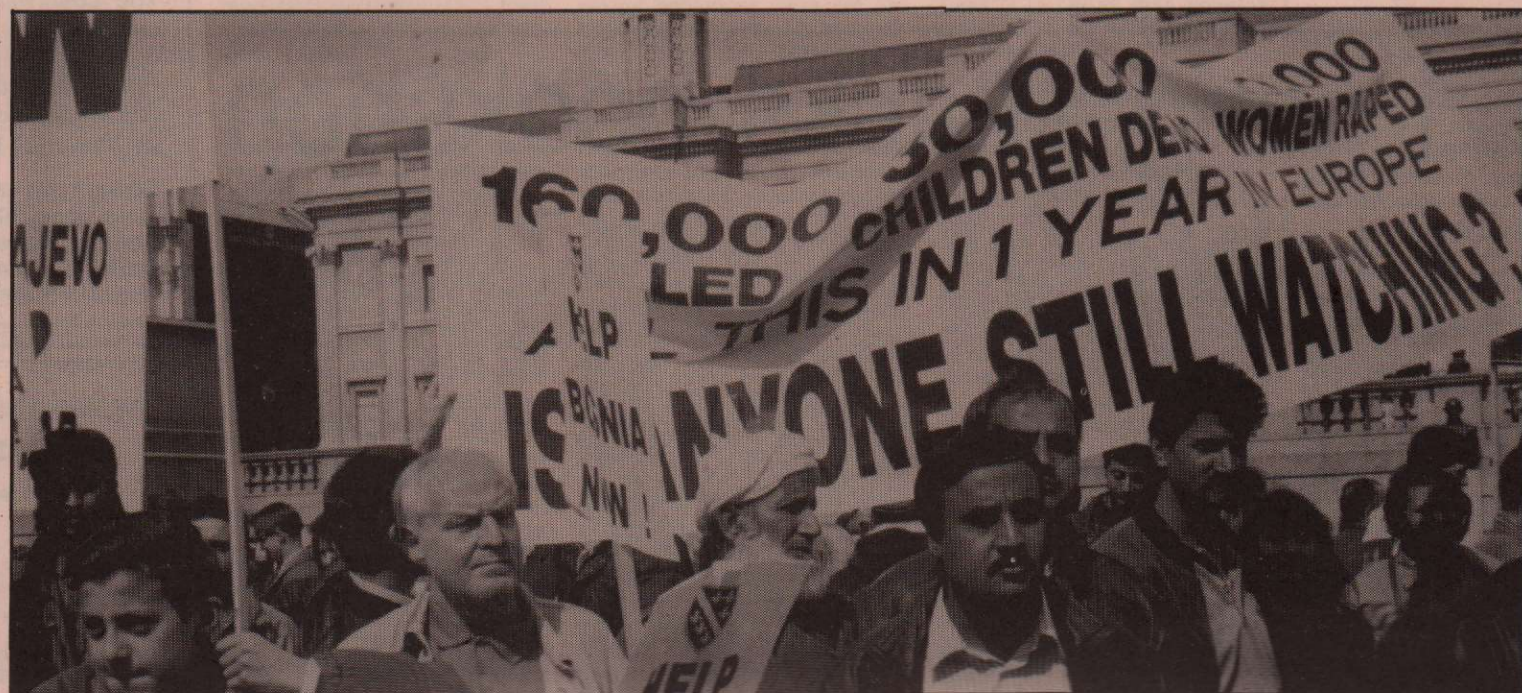
'Bad cop' went to check the seals on our trucks; 'good cop' stayed with us and sang Christmas carols. One convoy member asked if he could have a shot at driving the police car. Good cop said 'Yes!'

I will never forget the red tail-lights of the car disappearing in the rain on Christmas Eve as our convoy member drove away. All around us guns were firing. It was better than the Queen's speech any day.

At 2am on Christmas morning we finally made Zagreb. The vegetarians among us were fed ham. The barman claimed it was cheese with fish in it!



The platform at the rally in Trafalgar Square



Help Bosnia . . . demonstrators in London last year calling for the end to the genocide in Bosnia



Loading a truck in Le



# afka-like rney



are on 5 September 1993 that saw the first Workers Aid convoy on its way to Bosnia

Photo: Anthony Myers



eds during August last year in preparation for Workers Aid's first convoy

Photo: Anthony Myers

## City Lights

### Germany's structural weaknesses

THE situation in Germany, which along with Japan is the source of world economic growth over the last decade, gets no better.

The European slump has 'mercilessly laid bare the structural weaknesses of the German economy'. Don't take my word for it: this is the judgement of the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

His remarks come as a leading German economic institute warns that unless interest rates are cut drastically the situation could get worse before it gets better.

In a recent interview in the newspaper 'Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung', Kohl warned 'As an exporting country we have become too expensive through high wage levels'. But this was not the only problem: the country had failed to open up new markets and had been slow to turn research and development into new products.

Kohl warned that unemployment — now standing, even according to official figures, at 3.7 million — had to be tackled by wage cuts and an increase in part-time working.

More than a touch of the British disease, it seems.

### Economic nationalism in Japan

IT SEEMS only yesterday that Western commentators were trembling at the prospect of a Japanese takeover of the world market. Today they are gloating because the once-mighty Japanese economic locomotive is running out of steam.

Japan's national income will hardly grow at all this year, following last year's drop. Earlier this month the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecast a rise of barely 0.5 per cent.

The country's most cherished industries, including cars and electronics, are in deep trouble. In semiconductors, a vital sector, Japan has lost its recent pre-eminence to the US, and in car production the American 'Big Three' will this year regain their world lead.

Unemployment, now at a seven-year high, is rising — especially among the under-25s. The figures would be much higher but for the convention that firms hold onto their labour force in difficult times. How much longer that convention will be adhered to is a moot point.

A common view is that in manufacturing 1.5 million are surplus to current requirements, and 4 million overall.

The banks, until recently considered by many 'experts' to be the strongest in the world, are groaning under a pile of bad debt and these same 'experts' are now bracing themselves for a collapse of the entire financial system. Corporate profits are due to fall for the fourth year in a row.

Because of fear for the future, people are refusing to spend. The government claim is that people are caught in a 'psychological trap', following a fall in the value of the big Tokyo department stores for several months running. Even the big city supermarkets are re-

There has been much talk of a tax-cutting, reflationary budget, but opposition from the banks has stopped such a budget, although a set of measures is promised for the end of the month. But it is doubtful whether they will meet with US approval. The Clinton administration has been demanding large tax cuts so that the market for US exports would be widened.

So bad is the situation that people are rushing to buy lucky Daruma dolls, the roly-poly creature which, no matter how hard you push it, always lands the right way up. Sales of rakes to 'sweep up' good luck are also on the up.

While large numbers of computers still pour out of Japan's factories, the really profitable areas of the business — the development of software and the production of semiconductor chips — are falling increasingly into the hands of US firms.

The rising yen, by making exports less competitive, will force more and more production abroad, and US pressure on the Japanese government to open its markets will intensify.

It is hardly surprising that economic nationalism is being deliberately whipped up with 'Europe' and 'America' targeted as the principal enemies.

### Collective murder by the IMF

SOME 80 million people in Francophone Africa last week suffered a 50 per cent currency devaluation that is supposed to boost exports and cut imports. Whether it achieves the former is doubtful, but it will certainly mean a drastic cut in living standards for some of the poorest people in the world.

The Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) was set up in 1947, when a series of former French colonies in west and central Africa pegged their currencies to the French franc in a bloc that aimed to rival the sterling area. Countries such as Senegal, Mali, Togo, Chad and Gabon pegged their currencies to a special CFA franc, which has bought two French centimes for the last 47 years. Now the CFA franc will buy just one centime.

As export earnings from the region have fallen and its external debts have risen, the French government has been increasingly unwilling to guarantee the value of the local currencies in terms of the franc. Even though, as a sweetener, the International Monetary Fund and the French government agreed to wipe off some of the region's debts, they remain among the heaviest in the world.

Ten of the CFA members — Togo, Mali, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Senegal, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and the Comoro Islands — are on the World Bank's list of the world's poorest countries.

The combined income of the region in 1991 was a little more than that of Greater Manchester, yet it has a population some 40 times larger.

The devaluation will make the plight of the poor people of these countries even more desperate. Workers in the public sector will be hit by government wage freezes and rising prices, while small farmers will find their incomes falling as costs rise rapidly. The only beneficiaries are the ruthless monopoly trading companies.

This is a collective murder of Africans by the IMF and France, a civil servant in Mali said.



## George Eliot and her masterpiece

### PERSONAL COLUMN

SOURD by one TV disappointment after another, I had no very high hopes of the BBC2 adaptation of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

In fact I'd pretty well resigned myself to yet another parade of anachronisms, like the jarring modern-style telephone shown in use in the 1920s, in the recent programme about the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Lady Ottoline Morrell of all people using 'like' as a conjunction ('He didn't look like he believed me'), in that same crude travesty.

I'm delighted to say that — with a couple of small exceptions, which I'll come to in a minute — my fears proved groundless. The first of six instalments of what is arguably the greatest novel in the English language was translated to the small screen with care, fidelity, and an intelligence almost matching that of its author.

If it goes on as it began, this beguiling version of *Middlemarch* will become compulsory Wednesday-evening viewing.

If it goes on as it began, it will be a signal triumph for adapter Andrew Davies and for the actors, among whom Juliet Aubrey makes a flawless Dorothea Brooke and Patrick Malahide a convincing Casaubon, the elderly pedant whom Dorothea marries only to find him spending their honeymoon in the Vatican library (the way Malahide spoke the line 'I live too much with the dead' clutched the spine like an icy hand).

All being well then, Davies's *Middlemarch* could become the benchmark against which future adaptations of the classics will have to be measured for years to come.

Above all, we may expect it to persuade a fair number of viewers to tackle the book, despite its 896 pages (in the Penguin Classics version) that Davies allegedly spent three days in bed reading, lucky man that he is to be able to do so in the line of work.

Of course, no TV adaptation, however good, can hope to capture the subtleties and complexities of any half-way competent novel, let alone such an intricate masterpiece as Eliot's, with its close and careful — indeed, exhaustive — interweaving of four main stories, one or more characters in each of which plays a leading part in the other three.

But — and this is the first of my two criticisms — I couldn't help wincing slightly, as I'm sure the author herself would have done, at the way Davies has felt it necessary to tinker with these interwoven stories and to underline the obvious.

Simplification there has to be; but here it verges on oversimplification. Maybe that was unavoidable. But to have the innovative surgeon Tertius Lydgate (Douglas Hodge) fling out his arm and portentously cry 'The future!', when the stage-coach taking him to Middlemarch passes a railway under construction in 1829, is to treat viewers as simpletons.

My second criticism, which others (John Naughton and Andrew Moncur in last Sunday's 'Observer') have voiced, is that the crowds of extras, even the navvies building the railway, are far too cleanly, even immaculately, dressed. This sanitised view of the past is National Heritage bunkum.

GEORGE ELIOT, whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, is of much interest to Marxists, and not only because she is one of the greatest English novelists.

She was an exact contemporary of Karl Marx. Born in 1819, a year after him, she died in 1880, three years before his death, and is buried in Highgate

Cemetery, in a grave that by chance lies only a few yards away from his.

But these are mere coincidences. More to the point is that her first literary effort was to complete an English translation (1846) of the *Life of Jesus* by the Young Hegelian David Friedrich Strauss, a landmark in rational Bible criticism; and that she went on to translate (1854) Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*.

This was the work of which Engels was to write in 1888: 'One must oneself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians.'

Though she never became a Marxist, there can be no doubt that the book did have such a 'liberating effect' on George Eliot. To break from a narrow and bigoted form of Christianity and become a rationalist and a materialist demanded much courage and strength of character, especially for a woman.

Merely to have translated Feuerbach's book, under her real name, drew down upon her a torrent of vilification. One reverend gentleman wrote: 'There is an impudicity [i.e. shamelessness] of the mind more loathsome than any impudicity of the body, and Magdalene asylums [i.e. homes for the reformation of prostitute women] may be needed for others besides the unfortunate beings who seek a refuge from guilt and misery there!'

Nor did it help her reputation in mid-Victorian England to enter, in 1854, into what was in those days called a 'free union' with George Henry Lewes, author of a still readable *Biographical History of Philosophy* (1845-46) and a *Life of Goethe* (1855) which was for long the standard text.

Of Lewes it may fairly be said that by the time of his death in 1878 he was trying to grope his way forward from mechanistic materialism.

THE subtitle of *Middlemarch* is *A Study of Provincial Life*, and this is the indispensable key to any informed and rewarding reading of the novel.

Through her chosen microcosm — the Midland England of her childhood — she shows British capitalist society at a pivotal moment, drawing breath, as it were, on the eve of the 1832 Reform Bill, for the great leap forward that would bring into being modern Britain: industrialised, mechanised, urbanised, 'the workshop of the world'.

She gazes with an unflinching but not un pitying eye on a society riddled with deception and self-deception, selfishness, moral blindness, and hypocrisy. Money and its power to corrupt run through the book like a polluted and polluting stream.

Though her earlier *Felix Holt the Radical* (1866) has flashes of a socialist vision ('The greatest question in the world is, how to give every man a man's share of what goes on in life'), *Middlemarch*, written at the time of the Paris Commune, is far from optimistic.

Yet its moral earnestness and intelligence, its insight and maturity, no less than its humour, make it the one 19th-century English novel that every socialist should read.

With *Middlemarch* the English novel came of age. With *Middlemarch*, will British television do the same?

Perhaps. But I wouldn't bet on it.

Peter Fryer

## Television

# Where no holds are barred

Review by Anton Moctonian

CAN international law control the use of the ever more horrific weapons now being employed in the world's battle-zones? HORIZON: 'Small Arms, Soft Targets' (BBC2, 10 January) looked at the development of a new generation of small arms that have been engineered to cause maximum damage to the enemy.

The principle governing their development is a simple one: when you are at war and you go into a killing-zone, no holds are barred.

These weapons illustrate in a graphic manner how modern technological developments are being used for increasingly inhuman purposes. The international laws governing weapons-use in modern warfare have been in place since 1899, when it was made illegal to use bullets without metal jackets.

But since the Vietnam war, bullets have decreased in size. Now most bullets on the modern battlefield behave like dum-dums; breaking up and fragmenting in the body, giving war-surgeons nightmares.

### Pierce

A modern bullet can pierce a tank and then break up into thousands of pieces, causing terrific damage to the occupants. It is this type of bullet that is increasingly being used in modern warfare.

This is not the only inhuman category of weapon that is in use. According to Bobby Morton

of the Landmines Campaign of the Veterans of America, they have an increasingly destructive role. Over the last decade landmines have caused more deaths than any other weapon. This is because, when hostilities stop, the mines are still in operation.

Morton went on to illustrate the damage the weapons cause by looking at their wide use by the US in Laos. The US military dropped mines in that country for nine years, spending, according to some estimates, \$2 million a day on the project.

Now, 28 years on, the mines dropped during that period are still killing farmers. The mines used nowadays are horrific instruments of death. An arms dealer explained that if you go to buy a mine now, you are asked how you want it filled. The worst of them leap a metre out of the ground and scatter shrapnel for 360 degrees. They set out to wound, as a badly wounded soldier delays an army for more time than a dead one.

Modern laser weapons, developed as part of the Star Wars programme, have the ability to blind opposing armies. And, according to one military expert interviewed in the programme, these would be completely legal.

What is more, the prospects of a war in which these weapons are used draws closer and closer. Any attempt to stop their use by international treaties is of



'Intolerance' focused on neighbourhood disputes

course doomed to failure. Yet another example of dealing with symptoms, not causes.

THE scene is a council house in Ashington, near Newcastle on Tyne. The scared occupant opens her bright orange curtains to find all her windows have been broken.

Outside an outraged mob is staging a spontaneous demonstration. Some hold banners which read: 'We Want Them

Out.' They have frenzied looks on their faces. They are demonstrating against the Pitts family, dubbed by their community 'the worst neighbours in Britain'. The Pitts have eight children and four rottweiler dogs. They play loud heavy-metal music late at night and argue the streets.

CUTTING EDGE: 'Intolerance' (Channel 4, 10 January) focused on neighbourhood disputes. It featured a whole range of characters you would probably not live next door to.

### Shocked

Amongst them, John Gladden, who shocked his neighbours by putting a 700lb fibreglass fish on his roof. When Croydon council asked him to remove it, Gladden declared war. He proceeded to park a 55-ton Chieftain tank outside his house. He has also placed a 1-foot inflatable Winston Churchill on the top of his house with a sign which read: 'Up You Croydon Council!'

Almost every conceivable argument you can have with your next-door neighbour was covered in this remarkable programme: dogs, shared driveways, boundary disputes.

The film ended by showing how serious some of these allegations can become. A widow with tears in her eyes spoke bitterly into the camera. 'Some one blasts your husband's kingdom come. . . . It was just a fence, it was just a fence.'

## Programme guide

**Sunday 23 January AUCTION:** 'Peter and the Bear'. Sotheby's experts now make regular trips to Moscow and St Petersburg — sweetening contacts and spying out possible deals (9.30pm, BBC2).

**Monday 24 January HORIZON:** 'The Man Who Made Up His Mind'. A look at the latest hot potato in scientific circles — Neural Darwinism. Nobel prize-winner Gerald Edelman suggests an alternative view of the function of the brain (8pm, BBC2). **CUTTING EDGE:** 'Graham Taylor — The Impossible Job'. Portrait of the former England soccer manager, filmed over what were to be his last 18 months in that unenviable position (9pm, Channel 4). 'Barefoot Student Army'. In March 1988, an estimated 10,000 Burmese students were massacred when they took to the streets of Rangoon to protest against the corrupt and oppressive regime of Prime Minister Ne Win (11pm, Channel 4).

**Tuesday 25 January UNDERCOVER BRITAIN:** 'Living in Fear'. The horrors of eviction by unscrupulous landlords are



'Barefoot Student Army' looks at a massacre in Burma in 1988 (left); and former England soccer manager under fire in 'Graham Taylor — The Impossible Job'. Both Channel 4, Monday

captured in this film made by Manchester city council's tenancy relations team (9pm, Channel 4).

**Thursday 27 January 'The Pulse'**. Examines an issue at the heart of the government's controversial reform of the NHS: the closure of large hospitals and transfer of care out into smaller, community-based centres (8.30pm, Channel 4). **SECRET HISTORY:** 'White

Lies'. How opponents of apartheid conducted a London-based clandestine operation which enabled it, over a 40-year period, to smuggle into South Africa more than £100 million (9pm, Channel 4).

### Selected films

**A TALE OF SPRINGTIME** (1989) First of Eric Rohmer's 'Tales of the Four Seasons'

(Saturday, 10.55pm, BBC2). **WHISKY GALORE** (1948). The famous Ealing comedy was the late Alexander Mackendrick's first feature film (Sunday 3.35pm, Channel 4). **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHER** (1956). Ignore Don Siegel's anti-communist 'message' and enjoy this influential low-budget sci-fi classic (Thursday 12am, BBC2).

# The rising cost of study

THE rising costs of going to university are deterring potential students, say admissions tutors.

They sense the first signs of a levelling off in applications to higher education courses this autumn, though detailed figures have yet to be finally analysed.

Head teachers have already warned that the prospects of ever-increasing debts will put off able students.

The state grant was frozen three years ago, with loans being phased-in instead. From this autumn the grant will be cut by 10 per cent a year and replaced by a larger maximum loan.

Even government research shows that student income has

fallen by 10 per cent over the last three years, mainly because of declining help from family and friends.

Some universities are worried that they may have to get rid of academic and other staff over the next few years as the curb on intakes begins to bite.

### Problems

A long-term drop in student numbers could also cause problems in servicing loans taken out to cover building and refurbishment programmes.

Meanwhile lecturers in further education colleges have been sent ballot papers for strike action next month after the collapse of talks over

new contracts. Negotiators for the colleges are threatening to promise pay rises next September only to those staff who accept the worsened conditions of employment — which include locally-determined teaching hours, a longer working week and shorter holidays.

Some 90 colleges are already operating new contracts for new appointments and for promoted staff.

The government will hold back £50 million to the colleges until what it considers 'satisfactory' arrangements are in place.

LEAKED government documents show that the forthcoming Deregulation Bill will open

the way to a systematic reduction in transport safety standards and an increase in environmental blight.

The bill will weaken security arrangements at airports, reduce the licensing and testing of buses, coaches and lorries, and give the go-ahead for 44ft axle lorries to travel anywhere in Britain.

The ban on heavy lorries entering London at night will also be scrapped and the restriction on night flights will be lifted.

A memo from Patricia Brown, transport department permanent secretary, tells civil servants to look for 'any enforceable measure' and to consider whether there is 'scope for reducing their impact'.



# HOMES FOR VOTES

BY GEOFF PILLING

'DISGRACEFUL, wilful, unlawful, unauthorised, and improper.'

These were the words used by district auditor John Magill to describe the selling of hundreds of council houses for votes by Dame Shirley Porter and her fellow Tories on flagship Westminster council.

'My provisional view is that the council was engaged in gerrymandering, which I am minded to find is a disgraceful and improper purpose for which a local authority may act', says Magill, after an investigation lasting four and a half years.

The auditor's report arose from a complaint from local GP Dr Richard Stone, who wrote the first letter to Magill questioning the council's housing policy. Stone was distressed that none of his patients, although in dire need, could ever get housed yet hundreds of properties were boarded up in the borough.

Porter, arch-Thatcherite, stands condemned of misusing £21 million of taxpayers' money to fund a scheme to keep Westminster under Tory control. Magill recommends that Porter and the nine others accused should be ordered to pay back the money.

And he says that the six who were councillors — including Porter and Barry Legg, now MP for Milton Keynes South West — should be banned from further council service.

The Tory scheme involved moving people out of council property in wards where Labour had a slight majority and selling the houses to carefully-selected applicants who, it was assumed from their background and job, would vote Tory and keep the council under Porter's control.

Peter Brooke, Tory MP for City of London and Westminster South, has admitted that he was present at a meeting of Westminster Tory councillors at which the policy was discussed in March 1988. Dame Porter became leader of Westminster, the country's richest borough, ten years ago and made it Baroness Thatcher's pride and joy.

Porter led the fight to abolish the Labour-controlled Greater London Council and proposed an 'educational policy' that would pay schools according to the results they achieved. This was effectively quashed by the action of local headteachers.

When the poll tax was introduced eyebrows were raised at Westminster's ability, for two years running, to keep the tax at one of the lowest levels in the country.

Porter said this was the re-

sult of good housekeeping. Labour said it was because the Tory government had subsidised Westminster to the tune of £1,600 per taxpayer.

Wandsworth, another 'model' Thatcherite borough which is now threatened with the auditor's scrutiny, actually managed to levy a zero poll tax.

Legg, a wealthy accountant and 'tax consultant' who joined the Tory Party as a student at Manchester University, was Porter's closest confidant and before entering the Commons was Tory chief whip.

Since emerging onto the national stage 18 months ago, Legg has shown himself an ardent Thatcherite. He was one of the authors of a report urging the government to slash the social security bill by £8 billion by scrapping child benefit, privatising national insurance and abolishing mortgage tax relief.

Even right-winger Peter Lilley, social security secretary, thought such proposals too dangerous to implement.

Legg had more success in persuading Tory ministers to curb dole payments, and helped promote the cutting of dole entitlement from 12 to six months — a recommendation adopted in the last budget.

Though the district auditor's report concluded that Legg was not a fit person to sit on a council, in law he is not required to resign his seat. True to form, Labour said last week that 'at this stage' they would not demand his resignation from the Commons.

Dame Porter, now widely known as 'the other grocer's daughter', is heiress to the Tesco fortune.

Once named as the 20th wealthiest woman in Europe, she gained notoriety for the sale of three Westminster cemeteries to a property company for 5p each. After a storm of protest the council was forced to buy them back, with the loss of millions of ratepayers' money.

Magill's 235-page report, together with 10,000 sheets of evidence, is the outcome of one of the longest, most thorough and most costly investigations in the history of local government.

The district auditor found that an increase in the number of council house sales after the 1986 local elections, and the selection of properties offered for sale, were both driven by 'considerations of electoral advantage'.

## Where the money went

OVER £21 million was lost as a result of these malpractices:

- Over £13 million was lost selling vacant properties at big



Thousands are homeless on London's streets — Westminster council's policy kept hundreds of its houses boarded up

discounts on market prices. So much for the protagonists of 'market forces'!

- Another £2.6 million went in grants to help tenants stay in the borough by buying homes not owned by the council.

- Over £2 million was spent on bed-and-breakfast accommodation for those driven out of council homes as well as those on the 10,000-long waiting list who were denied the chance of a roof over their heads.

- Almost £2 million went on extra overheads and professional services in organising the policy.

- Nearly £2 million was spent in removing existing council tenants, and £750,000 was lost in rent and rates while 'suitable' (that is Tory-voting) buyers of vacant properties were sought.

- And almost £500,000 in rent was lost between the day a property was sold and the day the buyer moved in.

## Tories join the gravy train

TORY MP Teresa Gorman hit a £1 million jackpot with the council houses she bought on the cheap from Westminster.

Together with foreign office minister Alistair Goodlad and defence minister Jonathan Aitken she made killings after buying homes from the council.

In 1977 Gorman bought the leasehold of two houses in prestigious Lord North Street for £18,000 each. In May 1982 she became a Westminster councillor and just weeks afterwards bought the freehold on both properties for £12,500 each, making them far more valuable.

She paid a total of £61,000

for the two houses, which together are now worth over £900,000.

A passionate believer in the ethics of the marketplace, who once described ticket touts as 'good capitalist brokers and risk takers', Gorman became vice-chair of the corporation's housing committee before being elected Tory MP for Billericay, Essex, in 1987.

Goodlad, Tory MP for Eddisbury in Cheshire, obtained the leasehold for two properties in Lord North Street from a businessman in September 1979 and later bought both freeholds. The properties, next to the Commons, are now worth around £750,000.

Tory MP Alan Duncan has already quit his government job in a row over the profit he made on one of the council's properties.

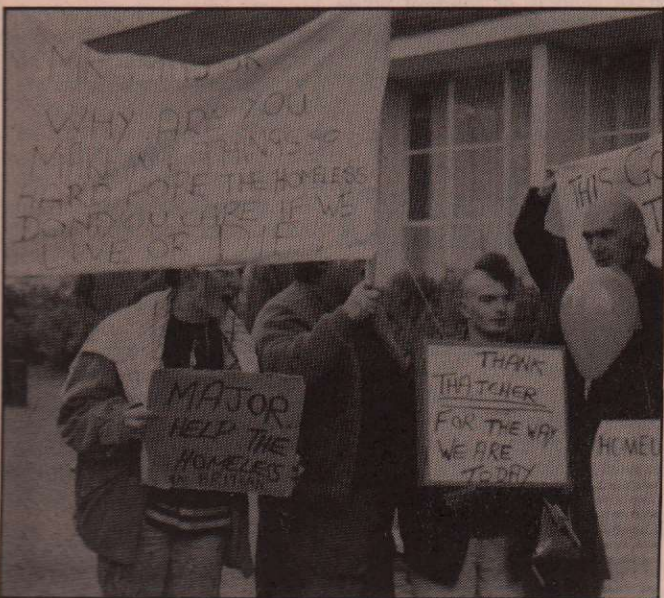
## Major's embarrassment

A CLEARLY embarrassed John Major told the Commons last week that 'people are considered innocent until proved guilty'. This, he added, 'is a cardinal principle of English law'.

Many who heard this wondered whether Major had read the Criminal Justice Bill, debated in the Commons only 24 hours before the Magill report was released.

This Bill in fact removes the presumption of innocence. It removes suspects' right of silence. It removes a defendant's right not to go into the witness box. It removes the defence's right not to submit its case before a Crown court trial.

Clearly there is one law for Tory councillors in Westminster, and another law for the rest of us.



Protesters making the plight of the homeless clear to Major

## SPECIAL OFFER — EXPIRES END FEB. 1994 'REVOLUTIONARIES THEY COULDN'T BREAK' BY N.VAN

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Trotskyist opponents — not, as Stalinist mythology pretended, because the latter 'turned their backs on the peasantry' or 'sold themselves to Japanese fascism'.

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\* \* \* \*

Ngo Van was a worker, a Trotskyist and a participant in the events he describes. He was imprisoned in the 1930s by the French colonial regime, and in 1945 escaped the Stalinist massacre.

He fled Vietnam to Europe, where he lives in exile. He combined first-hand experience with years of documentary research to write this book, which is a must for revolutionary fighters of today.

## The book and its author

The Vietnamese workers' movement took shape in mortal conflict with the French colonial regime before World War II.

It suffered defeat in 1945, caught between French attempts to reassert control on one side, and an alliance of the Communist party and reactionary nationalists on the other.

A decisive part was played in the workers' movement by the Vietnamese supporters of Leon Trotsky.

As the official Communist Party — under Stalin's instructions — carried out ever-more-ruinous zig-zags of policy, the Trotskyists discredited and defeated them in the workers' organisations.

The Vietnamese Communist Party enforced its power in 1945 by a brutal slaughter of its

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# VISION OF PROFITS — BUT NO 'MILK AND HONEY'

ISRAELI capitalists and their Western partners are dreaming of profits to be made in a new Middle East common market. Their liberal economists are trying to write off official figures showing that no less than a quarter of a million children in the state live below the poverty line.

Having regained US aid and loan guarantees with its 'peace' policy, Rabin's Labour government has done nothing to reverse policies that hit the poor.

Unemployment remains around 11 per cent, as it has been for three years. This is besides, thousands of Palestinian workers in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, locked out since the Gulf war.

According to journalist 'experts' like Avraham Tal, however, poverty is all the fault of the people who publish statistics!

'As long as an unequal distribution of income exists, which allows statisticians to categorize the public in tenths, which differ significantly in income, the National Insurance Institute (NII) will succeed in calculating a poverty line ("a level equal to 50 per cent of the average earned income per person") — and in dropping the bottom tenth and part of the one above it beneath the line.'

Claiming the poverty line is arbitrary, Tal has argued in the conservative daily 'Ha'aretz' (10 November) that the absence of riots motivated by financial hardship proved the poverty was not as bad as presented.

## Upset

This providence-tempting piece of complacency has upset other commentators. 'The Other Front', published by Jerusalem's radical Alternative Information Centre, links attempts to play down poverty with the bourgeoisie's expectations from Middle East peace talks.

'Along with Avraham Tal, Israeli liberals are dreaming of the common market that they will lead in the Middle East, and of how the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange flourishes after every one of Rabin's political moves. The party goes on but 600,000 Israelis, 250,000 of them children, are not invited to it.'

'While liberals are busy dreaming of a metro beneath the streets of Tel Aviv and of future flights to Amman, the

NII must not commit the *faux pas* of bringing out data on families that are not able to support their children. They mustn't be party-poopers.'

The poor include Palestinians who, though citizens, suffer economic and social discrimination as part of national oppression; unemployed or low-paid Jewish workers with children; elderly people; and new Russian immigrants, often professionals forced into low-paid menial jobs.

## Sacrifices

Ordinary Israelis might expect peace with the PLO and Arab states to mean an end to their sacrifices, with Israel reaping benefits from World Bank and European Union investment and loans promised for Palestinian development, while cutting the huge burden of settlements and military spending.

But the Labour government intends maintaining strategic settlements, and military supremacy, while continuing with cuts in social spending and services begun by its right-wing Likud predecessors.

Instead of halting colonial exploitation in the occupied territories, the aim is to expand it. Any 'peace dividend' is strictly for the rich.

As Dr Uri Ram told the Histadrut labour unions' daily 'Davar':

'In the Era of Peace, all barriers to the evasion of social responsibility in Israel are disappearing . . .'

'The class composed of the managerial-technological-business elite will apply itself energetically to taking advantage of the new space opening up in the region — which will mean maximal exploitation of the available cheap, unorganised labour in the Middle East.'

'In a region where labour unions don't exist, or where the existing unions are in retreat, the theoretical justification for this frenzied activity by private entrepreneurs resembles

Reagan's and Thatcher's "economic formula".'

Uri Ram says the poverty issue comes up once a year, like an annual festival.

'The festival's participants say that poverty is a by-product of a basically correct system.'

'They do not feel that poverty is produced by this society, that poverty is the other side of the boom and prosperity that they celebrate so well.'

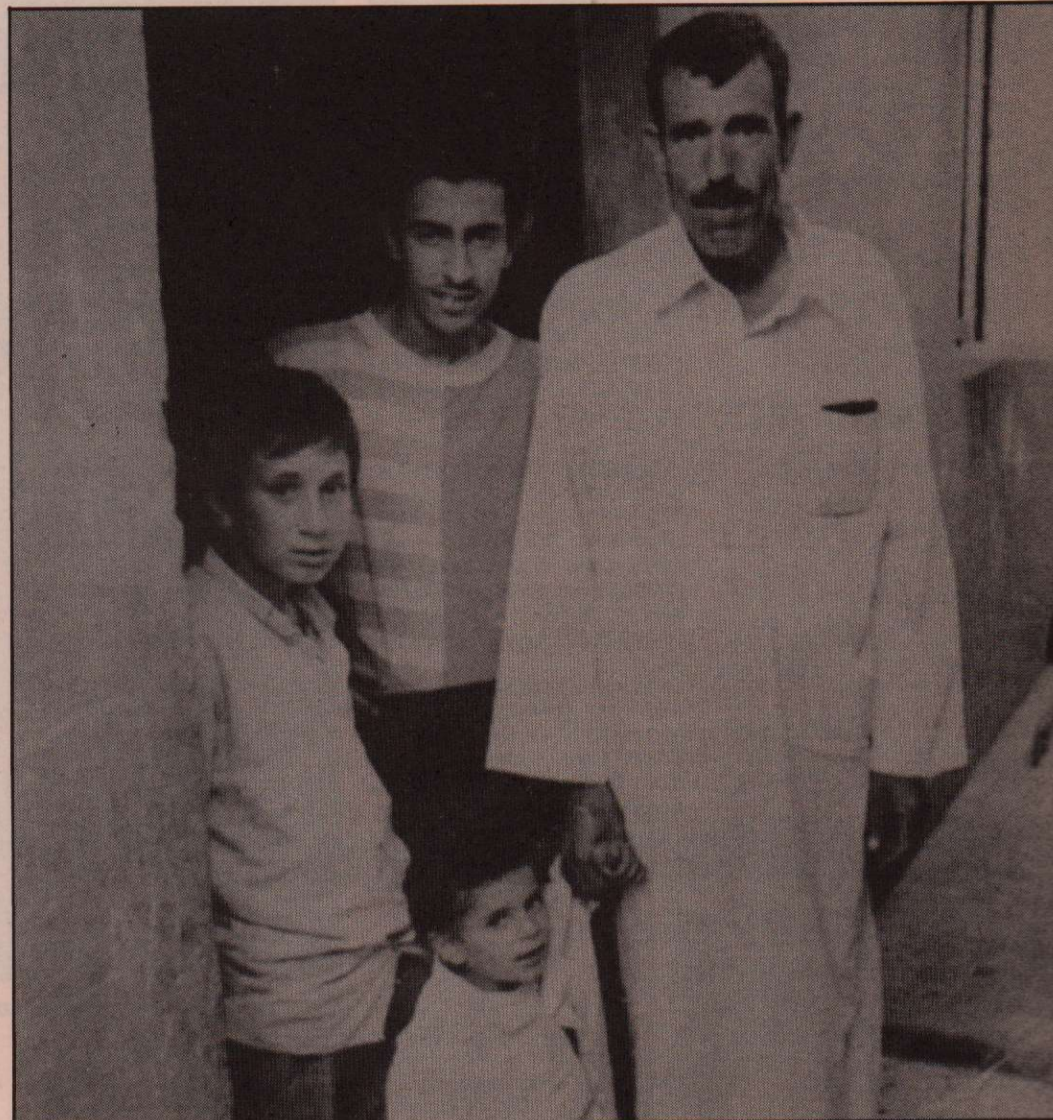
'It needs to be emphasized that in the last decade there has been a socio-economic upheaval, besides which the "1977 electoral upset" [i.e. when Likud ousted Labour for the first time] pales in comparison.'

'I am referring to the victory of the New Right, as it is termed in the West: the acceptance of its positions in the political and ideological debate, and its domination of the foci of power, including governmental ministries, the central committees of the major political parties — especially Labour and the Likud — and even the media.'

'The New Right's taking of the foci of power has radically changed the public debate and caused a drastic decrease in governmental and public sector responsibility.'

## Withdrawal

'Some expressions of this are the state's partial withdrawal from the fields of education, health-care, and housing; its pulling back from setting goals for the economy, and the consequent widening of social disparities.'



One of the Gaza Strip's many unemployed with his children: more are falling below poverty line

# French lesson! Million march for state education

ONE million French people marched through Paris in pouring rain last week, to defend state education and demand a halt to spending cuts.

A last-minute government retreat, on plans to switch funds to fee-paying religious schools, did not dissuade people from coming.

Parents, teachers and other trades unionists, and anti-racist groups joined the march.

'There are at least a million and possibly many thousands more,' said Jacques Dufresne of the parents' confederation. 'We never imagined such a gathering.'

Leading the demonstration

was a big contingent, complete with pipe band, from Brittany, a stronghold of the church schools.

Busloads of protesters from other regions were still arriving as the front end of the march began to disperse.

Many more people were unable to reach the capital, as trains and airlines could not cope.

## Slogans

Demonstrators' slogans denounced education minister Francois Bayrou, who wanted to increase local government funding for private schools.

After France's constitutional court ruled his legislation contradicted educational equality, Bayrou has been pushed into the background temporarily.

Prime Minister Edouard Balladur says increased funds will be made available for state schools. Balladur has promised there will be no favouritism for fee-paying schools.

The French example will be watched with interest by parents and teachers in Britain, where the Tories are starving state schools of funding while demanding more old-fashioned discipline, and promising funds for church- and business-run education.

# British aid linked to arms

AN AID programme to Malaysia that turned out to be a disaster was used as a sweetener to secure a contract for British arms manufacturers, it was claimed last week.

Prime Minister Major and Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd were at the centre of the deal, which according to former defence minister Sir George Younger involved the supply of Hawk aircraft and two frigates to the Malaysian regime.

Despite the objections of senior civil servants about the wisdom of spending £200 million on a hydro-electric project in Pergau, northern Malaysia, the scheme got the go-ahead.

## Final

It was the prime minister who took the final decision, claims Sir Tim Lancaster, permanent secretary to the Overseas Development Administration.

Lancaster told MPs last week that although the Pergau scheme 'was unequivocally a bad one in economic terms', 'commercial pressures were very great indeed', especially from the Trade and Industry Department.

The scheme has since been described as an ecological disaster and has cost Malaysia a further £100 million to put right. ■ More Major antics are described in the front page lead!

# Bosnia comes to Ireland

PLANS to 'ethnically cleanse' the north of Ireland have shown that reactionary forces around the world have taken inspiration from the barbaric Serb-fascist actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Protestant Ulster Defence Association's 'doomsday' scheme deals with the possibility of withdrawal of British troops from the north.

They plan to 'surrender' at least two counties in a repartition of Ireland. One map of a possible repartition marks much of county Tyrone for 'ethnic cleansing'.

'Nullification', which clearly means killing the Republican population, is described as difficult 'but reduces demands on food supplies and if all could be rounded up could be finished within 1-2 weeks'.

'Expulsion' would reduce demands on food but would give enemy forces extra men, and

'internment' would be a drain on resources but would provide a 'useful bargaining chip in any negotiations'.

Support for the plan came from a spokesman for MP Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and former Belfast mayor, Sammy Wilson. He described the 'doomsday' plan as a 'very valuable return to reality'.

He also said it showed that some people were prepared to take radical action to protect an independent Ulster identity.

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