Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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SOUTH AFRICA: STARK REALITY BEHIND HOPE

'WE ARE free at last', cried Nelson Mandela at a victory rally following the South African elections, which made him the country's next president.

But behind the talk about 'freedom' lies a stark reality.

The 'government of national unity' that Mandela is to head will have one central task: to discipline the South

BY THE EDITOR

defeat when he said that the new

government could for the first

time represent 'all the people of

South Africa'. He said that the

ANC leader would soon assume

the highest office in the land

with all its 'awesome responsi-

bilities'. Mandela was 'a man of

destiny', De Klerk said.

operation to him.'

explosion.

African working class. The great hopes — expressed graphically in the massive queues of people waiting to vote — that many have in the election of the ANC will be cruelly dashed.

The honeymoon cannot last long. The new government — controlled by the old state machine that remains entirely intact, with 95 per cent of senior officials in the central civil service being white — will soon have to turn on the working class as it fights for houses, for jobs, and for an end to the squalor in which millions are condemned to live.

Echoed

The same 'victory for freedom' and 'defeat for fascism and racism' demagogy used by Mandela and the ANC has been heard from trade union and Labour leaders in Britain in the wake of the election in which the African National Congress won more than 60 per cent of the

The current white South African president, F.W. de Klerk, echoed Mandela in conceding described as a 'difference'!

Mandela gave a foretaste of things to come when he said: 'Go back to your jobs and let's get South Africa working.'

The South Africa he speaks of is one dominated by a tiny handful of bankers and industrialists who monopolise the wealth of the country, including the land.

We are rolling up our sleeves to tackle the problems of the country,' said Mandela. The 'problems' are glaringly obvious: mass unemployment, homelessness and destitution among millions of black

These problems can be solved in the interests of the working class only if they take power into their own hands and use the wealth of the country for the benefit of the ordinary people.

Safe

Long before the election, Mandela and the ANC leaders said clearly that they have no intention of mobilising the working class against the power of capital. Indeed, Mandela gave guarantees to big business that its property will be safe under any government he heads.

Long before the election, the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International warned that an ANC government, backed by the South African Communist Party, would govern on behalf of the ruling class against the working class.

That is why we fought in the election for the building of a party to represent the interests of the working class and poor people. And why we refused to agree with the left who urged 'critical support' for the ANC.

The tasks in South Africa in the aftermath of the election remain essentially what they were before: to fight for the independence of the working class, including the right to independent trades unions with the right to strike, and to prepare for the big class battles that cannot be long postponed. ■ S. Africa what next? page 8.

Corruption revealed in **Zimbabwe** A GLIMPSE of corruption issuing from the 'liberation' of Zimbabwe — where capitalism is still firmly in place — was given by the 'Economist' magazine last month.

An article in its 16-22 April edition said: 'Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's president, was swept to power in 1980, after 16 years of guerrilla war against white rule, by black peasants who believed his promise to hand back to them the land acquired by white Rhodesians.

'For years nothing much happened. Now, it seems, his government has begun dishing out the land to friends and cronies. Newspapers alleged last week that state land had been leased to cabinet ministers, army generals, civil servants and other friends of the ruling party. On April 11 President Mugabe belatedly ordered an inquiry.'

Choicest

The article reports that, 14 years after Mugabe was elected, 4,000 big farmers, most of them white, still own half the country's arable land, and the choicest bits at that. 'About 7m blacks remain crowded on the rocky, dry reserves where white rule left them.'

The article adds: 'Zimbabweans have become accustomed to a diet of scandals, kickbacks and embezzlements.'

On other pages:

May Day lessons, p2 Thoughts on May Day; Transport; and Sweatshop Britain,

Ukrainian miners' step forward, p4&5 Bosnia fighters,

p6&7



The Workers International joined the 120-strong Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign contingent, many of whom were Bosnian refugees, on the London march on May Day, international workers' day; the call was for the defence of Bosnia against fascist aggression — see pp.2 and 3

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

Memorial Meeting Tom Kemp 1921-1993

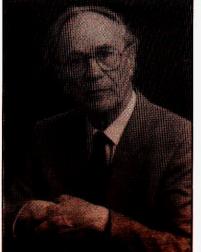
Conway Hall **Red Lion Square** London WC1

Friday 3 June 7.30pm

We invite all Tom Kemp's comrades, family and colleagues to join in

commemorating the life of an outstanding Marxist, a dedicated teacher and a fearless fighter for the working class and

the rebuilding of the Fourth International.



decades. That cannot be

trades unionists in France, called at the end of last month in Paris to launch a movement against unemployment and for a shorter week without wage cuts, sent the following message to Tuzla in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

FROM OLIVIA MEERSON IN PARIS

Trades unionists and activists in various workers' organisations, we are meeting today to defend the social gains of workers.

governments and the United Nations.

Reviving the internationalist tradition of the workers' movement, we send our warmest greetings to the independent miners' union and the population of Tuzla, a major industrial centre of Bosnia-Herzegovina and which stands at the forefront of the struggle against ethnic cleansing and the right to live in peace in a multi-cultural

Workers must come to the help of workers. We call on all workers' unions to join in this

French trades unionists greet Tuzla who are being subjected to barbaric aggression and are also victims of the policies of Western

A MEETING of more than 100 independent

On the eve of May Day, the international day

fight and bring their moral but also material support to the workers of Bosnia and their trades unions

of workers' solidarity, we express our heart-felt support for the workers and people of Bosnia,

Workers Press

Some May Day lessons

ACCORDING to some estimates, as many as 15,000 gathered last weekend on Clapham Common, south London, to take part in the May Day festival organised by the London trades councils. But nobody should be fooled about the nature of this event.

The truth is that sections of the trade union and Labour leaders have set out to bury May Day, the day when workers traditionally celebrate their common interests as an international class.

For years these labour leaders have used May Day for empty holiday speech-making about 'solidarity' and 'internationalism'. Now they want to drop even the words.

The London May Day march — on this occasion from Kennington Park to Clapham Common — was, as for the past several years, composed predominantly of members of the Turkish and Kurdish communities in London. Participation by the labour movement was miniscule, with only a handful of trade union banners, the majority of those from local trades councils.

Even worse, while there was much demagogic talk from the platform about the supposed 'victory for freedom' and 'defeat of fascism' in South Africa, the words 'Bosnia' and 'Gorazde' — where fascist barbarism is being practised every day — never left the lips of the platform speakers at Kennington Park and Clapham Common. So much for their 'fight against fascism'!

Where demagogy ended, blatant political distortion began. Labour frontbencher Dawn Primarolo, supposedly on the left of the party, told those on Clapham Common prepared to listen that a Labour government would never allow an economic policy to be built on the backs of attacking trades unions. Primarolo must know that the Labour Party leaders are fully committed to retaining the most important anti-union laws now in force.

A Labour government will dance to the tune of big business and the bankers. It intends to make the working class pay for the crisis of the capitalist system.

AS THE May Day march was on its way, an 'alternative May Day' event, called at short notice in protest against the Criminal Justice Bill, attracted several thousand people to Trafalgar Square. The event organisers claimed a 20,000 strong turnout; even the police admitted there were 6,000.

The rally brought together many protest movements — from anti-Twyford Down campaigners, to squatters, to rave party organisers, to travellers whose rights under the Criminal Justice Bill will be severely curtailed. Most of the people supporting the Trafalgar Square event have been on the receiving end of police harassment, and many of brutality.

The vast majority of the Trafalgar Square protesters are repelled by the labour movement as it is presently led and organised. Hardly surprising given that the labour and trade union leaders have lifted not a finger in defence of working-class rights and civil liberties; instead vying with the Tories to present themselves as the 'party of order'.

Under these conditions, there is a real danger that many of those represented in Trafalgar Square will turn their backs on the working class and look to reactionary forces in the hope of solving their problems.

Only the fight for a new leadership in the working class, one that fights to express its internationalism, can prevent this happening.

Letters

WE WELCOME LETTERS
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A rap over the knuckles

A RAP over the knuckles for Workers Press for not making more of the Scottish TUC's decision to launch 'an immediate financial appeal to provide urgent food aid to the 60,000 multiethnic miners and their families in the Tuzla region of Bosnia' ('Scottish TUC backs help for Bosnia', 30 April).

Why should Workers Press—which has given such coverage to Workers Aid for Bosnia and to the struggle of us Bosnians against ethnic cleansing—relegate this news to a few paragraphs on page 3? True, it was the subject of last week's John Fordun column, but it was news of great importance for us in Bosnia—and deserved a higher profile.

As your report pointed out, when moving the resolution Bill Speirs [the STUC deputy general secretary] said it was Workers Aid for Bosnia that had prompted the STUC initiative. I myself met Bill Speirs with Dot Gibson of Workers Aid.

Many of the union leaders who were contacted by Workers Aid for Bosnia sent personal donations and donations from their unions to Workers Aid for Bosnia as well as messages of support, but did not respond to the appeal for the trades unions themselves to send aid to help build workers' internationalism.

Only Bill Speirs asked for an invitation to send a delegation to Tuzla, and as a result the STUC has decided to act. That is exactly what Workers Aid for Bosnia has been campaigning for.

I can't understand why people who say they represent the views of the common people in Britain take the same position on Bosnia as the John Major government — that is to shelter behind a so-called 'even handedness' which in reality equates the murderer and his victim.

However, a campaign has now been launched by the leadership of the Scottish trades unions in support of the Tuzla miners, and in that respect they are, perhaps, beginning to take sides

> Faruk Ibrahimovic Tuzla Radio, Tuzla

One up to Fordun

CONGRATULATIONS to John Fordun's column for ringing alarm bells about the legislation on video nasties (16 and 23 April). This is an extremely sinister development, to which the Labour Party has acquiesced supinely.

d supinely.

The criteria for banning

films includes giving 'inappropriate models' to young people. This can easily be stretched beyond sexual violence to include any kind of behaviour which the Establishment doesn't approve of, e.g. homosexuality.

Ironically, in the same week that the issue was debated in parliament, a report was published by the Policy Studies Institute, which demonstrated that 'young criminals' have not consumed any more video nasties than anybody else. There is also separate evidence that sex offenders have not consumed vast amounts of pornography.

Developments in America show up some strange alliances favouring censorship. Certain feminist groups have lined up with the most reactionary Republican and Christian groups in trying to ban pornography. Thankfully, left-wing feminists have been alarmed by this development, and have begun to campaign against censorship.

There is an interesting premise at the heart of the censorship lobby: they argue that images cause behaviour. This is of course an idealist argument, quite contrary to a materialist view. The idealist view is being used quite deliberately to obfuscate the real source of violence today: the degenerate chaos of capitalism.

Is it surprising that films are full of violence, when capitalism globally is hell-bent on material and cultural destruction? Films such as 'Night of the Living Dead' are radical metaphors for this barbarism and should be defended by socialists. The film John Fordun mentions — 'I Spit on Your Grave' — has in fact attracted much critical support as a portrayal of the brutality of rape.

In fact the horror genre has a long and distinguished history in exposing the dark side of the bourgeois order. For example, the 19th-century narratives of Dracula, Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde, remain potent images of the destructiveness lying under the surface of capitalism.

The right-wing always begins to suppress and destroy culture in the name of the 'family'. The video-nasty campaign is the thin end of the wedge that leads to burning books. Shame on the Labour Party! It is the task of Marxists to defend film-makers and others against this philistinism.

Roger Horrocks

Careless impressionism

Fulham

I HAVE no complaints against Workers Press trying to cover a wide area of international events. However, the report of the recent Argentinian elections in your issue of 30 April shows how necessary it is for its reporters not to be impressionistic and careless.

Workers Press as a revolutionary paper must seek an allround reputation for accuracy and thoughtfulness in its reports as well as its polemics.

The recent elections did not return Menem for the fifth time in five years. It was part of a manoeuvre which he set in motion to return him for a second term in the coming presidential elections. The polls took place to elect a constituent assembly, which he wants to alter the constitution so he can stand for a second term as president in July 1995.

Menem planned for an absolute majority in the constituent assembly and made a pact with the Radical Party, the bourgeois party which formed the government at the end of military rule in 1983. The Radical Party was demoralised and in decline. Its leaders agreed to support Menem's change to the constitution in a horse-trading nact

In the event, the Radical Party had its worst election in its history. Its vote went down to 20 per cent.

The election was certainly a blow against Menem, who expected the election would give him around an 80 per cent majority in the constituent assembly, which is what the two parties have together in the present congress

The sell-off of industry, the attacks on workers' conditions in the work-places, both directly and through state legislation, the increasing of an already wide polarisation between rich and poor, the continuous crisis and decline in the provinces, and the discontent over health, education and pensions and government corruption have certainly led to what the article calls 'a process going on for some time'.

In Santiago del Estero, one of the provinces recently in revolt, which the article talks about and which had a Peronist government, the abstentions reached 40 per cent. There were big abstentions in other provinces such as Juy Juy and Tucuman.

In the industrial belt of Buenos Aires unemployment increased by 40 per cent last year to reach 9.4 per cent. A lot of people not included in the government figures are living by any means they can and are outside of any social security provisions

The emergence of the Frente Grande is a most important result of the election. It did not gain 37 per cent of the vote throughout the country, as the article says. The Peronists took 38 per cent and, throughout the country, the Frente Grande took 13 per cent. However, it triumphed in the city of Buenos Aires and in the city of Neuquen, while in the province of Buenos Aires it displaced the Radicals to take second place. The victory in Buenos Aires is of great significance.

Throughout the country, Menem got less than 25 per cent of the electorate. But more important is the process revealed in the election. It represents an accelerating polarisation in the country.

The vote for the Frente Grande represents a movement of workers and petty bourgeois breaking with Peronism and looking for an alternative. Some of them have gone to Rico - a demagogue appealing to nationalism. The question posed is: will this process be consolidated around this popular front and diverted by it, or will it go onward to a proletarian revolutionary solution. That, of course, depends on the building of a revolutionary leadership, which brings the second great question out of this election.

How was it that all of the Trotskyist organisations in Argentina were taken unawares by this development? There are traditions of Trotskyism in the country and it still has a sizeable influence in Buenos Aires. However, the vote of the three organisations who formed an electoral alliance — the MAS (Movement to Socialism), the MST (Movement of Socialist Workers) and the PO (Workers Party) — had 139,422 votes in October last year; in this election on 10 April they won 71,668.

There is every need for a thorough and objective study of the popular front developments. not only in Argentina, but as a world-wide tendency. That is why we cannot have impressionism in assessments. With impressionism goes propagandism. Together they are barriers in developing a real grasp of how workers are moving and finding ways of developing their independent activity and politics. Trotsky's 'Whither France?' and his writings on Spain, as well as Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism, begin to live to the full again.

John White Birmingham

Å The Editor adds: There were serious omissions from the article on Argentina, resulting in some confusion. In the first paragraph, it should have read: 'Argentinian President Menem's party won again for the fifth time in five years . . .' Concerning the Frente Grande, later in the article the '37 per cent of the vote' should have been qualified as being in the 'federal district of Buenos Aires'. We apologise to readers and the writer of the article for these omissions.

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WORKERS AID FOR BOSNIA's 120-strong contingent — which marched on 1 May, International Workers' Day, to demand that the workers' movement takes up its responsibilities to defend and bring workers' solidarity to the people of Bosnia against fascist aggression — made quite an impact as it marched chanting slogans through the May Day festival on Clapham Common, south London.

Most of this contingent were Bosnian refugees, but they were joined by members of Workers Aid and the WRP/Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International. Meanwhile, the main march consisted predominantly of members of the Turkish and Kurdish community, many of whose leaders look back to the golden age for Stalinist lies, falsification and self-delusion that in Russia, eastern Europe and China there was a socialist heaven.

The 'trade union' contingent from Britain on the May Day march was its usual pitifully small size. It raised the chant: 'Workers of the world unite — kick the Tories out!' Not an internationalist slogan!

The Bosnians were upset about marching with Stalinists; they certainly don't think that eastern Europe was a socialist heaven — they lived there, after all. The red star on a yellow circle of some of the flags of Kurdish 'Communists' reminded them of the symbols carried by the Serbian fascists. Not surprising, then, that they didn't want to join the march. Workers Aid and WRP members joined them on a separate march about 50 yards behind the main demonstration.

This incident shows the big tasks involved in lifting socialism and communism out of the mud into which they have been thrust by Stalinism. These tasks are for real communists — Marxists — working within the working class to understand the blocks to its consciousness. How can this be achieved without Workers Press?

Mike Cooke Send money to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Coming soon

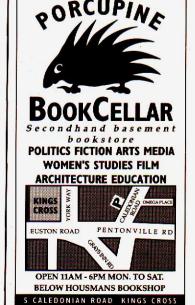
Construction Safety Campaign
Diary

WEDNESDAY 12 MAY Ludlow magistrates' court. HSE prosecution of Bromfield Sand & Gravel over serious accident with fork-lift truck. SATURDAY 21 MAY CSC annual general meeting. 10.30am-5pm, Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Road, London NW5.

TUESDAY 14 JUNE St Pancras coroner's court, Camley Street, London NW1 (tel. 071-387 4884), 9.30am. Inquest into death of John McLaughlin (45), killed when roof collapsed in January. Christopher Nelson (48) was severely injured. They were working on extension to car showroom in Finchley Road.

WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE St Pancras coroner's court, Camley Street, London NW1 (tel. 071-387 4884), 9am. Inquest into death of Tony Fishendon (27), killed in August 1992 while carrying a scaffold pole near a railway line; a passing train caused the electric current to arc to the pole. Family's solicitor requested that BR director for safety be put in dock, but coroner refused. After judicial review the case has been put back to

the coroner. DPP turned down manslaughter investigation. Inquest may be interrupted by further challenges



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Thoughts on May Day

BY GEOFF PILLING

MEMBERS of the Workers Revolutionary Party marched with around 100 Bosnians through London on May Day.

In the event (see opposite page) there was only a small representation from the British trade union and labour

POOL LOUIS

SHEFFIELD

ABOLISH

THE ANTI

UNION

movement in the crowd assembled at Kennington Park.

The great majority of those present were members of the Kurdish and Turkish community, some of whose leaders are Stalinists. They came with red banners, some bearing the hammer and sickle, some portraits of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Banners

When the Bosnians saw the banners and flags many were upset. They would not march

with the 'communists', who were carrying the same colour flags as the Chetniks.

We held a meeting with the Bosnian comrades. We told them that we were not responsible for the composition of the march but in any case were in favour of all workers, whatever their politics, having the right to

On this basis the Bosnians agreed to march, as long as the contingent was clearly separated from those with the red flags. As a result a successful contingent made a big impact as it marched through the May Day festival on Clapham

Chants

Its political chants made clear where it stood - for the defence of Bosnia, for the fight against fascism and against the United Nations.

Some thought should be given to this experience. It is a demonstration of the great damage created by Stalinism in general and the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy in eastern Europe and the former USSR in particular. As a result of their experiences many sincere people do equate the monstrosities of Stalinism with 'socialism'.

The rebuilding of consciousness in the working class, that is the fight for internationalism, is a complex problem requiring much patience and persistence and certainly not something that can be solved with a few simple slogans.

Strengthen safety laws

the Construction Safety Campaign's march through London for Workers Memorial Day on Thrusday 28 April.

About 800 joined the march with banners from the builders' union UCATT, the Transport and General Workers' Union, the public sector union UNISON. One worker came from Denmark sporting the flag of the Stilladsarbejbernes Branchklub

They marched behind a banner calling for the strengthening of safety laws in opposition to the governments proposals to deregulate them.

As part of the day workers went to lobby their MPs and more than 30 MPs had signed an Early Day Motion in support of the campaign. There was a public meeting at which Labour's John Prescott was down to speak but he sent a note to say he couldn't make it. UCATT general secretary George Brumwell and a relative of a building worker who died working on the Channel Tunnel

WORKERS came together to support

builders union.

Photo Alan Clark

Sweatshop **Britain**

BY PETER GIBSON

A JOB for a trainee chef in Faversham, Kent, at a wage of £35 for a 39-hour week (89p an hour!), has been on offer at the local Jobcentre.

The 39-hour week in cluded split shifts and weekend work, and was on offer at the same time as the Labour Party national executive (NEC) pulled back from the policy of a national minimum wage.

Labour leader John Smith told the NEC that the party had not been able to convince the public that a minimum wage was a good idea.

The Tory government and the employers have always argued that minimum wages cause firms to employ less people. John Smith and the Labour Party are not keen to upset the employers.

Created

A study from the London School of Economics, commissioned by the agriculture ministry, has shown that the agricultural wages board created jobs rather than destroyed them. The wages boards and wages councils, which set minimum wages in some industries, have now been abolished by the Tories.

The LSE study also shows that other wages councils had beneficial effects on employment in the industries covered — ones with poor wages, high exploitation and sweatshop conditions.

And the Low Pay Unit has

found that 20 per cent of former wage-council protected jobs advertised in government Jobcentres are now being offered at below the old minimum rates.

A degrading ordeal

Leicester Education Alliance conference

The Degrading of

Knowledge in

Education

Saturday 21 May, 10.30am-4pm

Vaughan College,

St Nicholas Circle, Leicester

Details from Paul Henderson, Department of

Sociology, Leicester University, Leicester LE1 7RH

(0533 707730 or 0533 522748)

BY FRED POTTER

ON Christmas Eve last year Susan Edwards (34), serving three years for non-violent offences, was rushed to hospital in labour and gave birth to a baby girl while she was handcuffed to a prison officer.

Apologies for her ordeal are thick in the air. The directorgeneral of the prison service has apologised; the Home Office has apologised; Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester, has apologised; and Styal prison, Cheshire, has apologised, saying that prison officers had taken 'too literally' the instruc-tion that Edwards had to be secure at all times.

She had absconded three times, once on a previous visit to the maternity unit at the same hospital.

It has now been revealed that Edwards's 14-year-old son, who had gone with her to the hospit-

al, was left alone there for five hours because neither prison nor hospital had made any arrangements for him to get

Apologies won't cut any ice this time round. We already knew that the British penal system is a bastion of soulless inhumanity, particularly in its treatment of women. The stripsearching of Irish women prisoners told us that.

But the treatment of Susan Edwards strikes a new low in barbarity. Even in medieval dungeons, women who gave birth were able to gather their new-born babies into their

The oafs responsible for the decision to treat Edwards like a tethered animal should be kicked out of the service forthwith. And every midwife, every nurse, and every trade unionist should join in a nation-wide storm of protest against a system that allowed her to be treated in such a degrading way.

It's only profits that count BY ROY THOMAS

THE systematic abuse and disregard for the laws controlling public transport driving hours, and the state of buses and coaches, have been exposed at the inquest into the deaths of a driver and nine US tourists in a coach crash.

The vehicle overturned on the M2 near Faversham, Kent, in November 1993.

At the inquest the coroner warned the jury that it would hear evidence which might make it angry, but that it must remain objective.

The driver of the coach had finished work the night before the crash at 6.30pm. He started back at work at 5.45am the next day. But, in addition to this, he had a full hour's drive to and from his home to get to work.

that he had only had four and three-quarter hours' sleep the night before the crash. He had also exceeded the legal driving hours limits.

The day of the crash should have been the driver's rest day. Bus and coach drivers must have one 24-hour break every 14 days by law.

Older coaches and buses are also required to have speed regulators to prevent them being driven at more than 70mph. This had been disconnected in the coach that crashed.

Raid

Government vehicle inspectors found a similar situation in a number of coaches operated by the same company - Travellers, based in Hounslow, west London — after a raid on its depot following the crash.

Evidence snowed It was reported to the court coach had been driven at 78mph. The coach's brakes were also found to be defective. Similar defects were found on other Travellers' coaches.

Safety glass on the crashed coach had been removed and replaced with single sheets of glass to reduce weight and so produce more miles per gallon of fuel, it was reported to the

The Americans killed in the crash had been thrown out of the coach windows and many had ended up under the vehicle as it overturned.

Regulations controlling driving hours were supposed to ensure safety but they are now being broken and disregarded throughout the country. The government's response is not to tighten up on the enforcement of the law but rather to relax the regulations so that the current abuse becomes legal!

Reduced

The inspectorate that checks vehicles is being reduced in size and consultants have put forward proposals on its privatisa-

In the same week as the M2 crash inquest, Somerset council and police checked nine school coaches, following a warning in March to the owner that they were not up to scratch.

Of the nine coaches checked, eight were found to be defective and one driver was arrested for allegedly driving at over the blood-alcohol limit.

Exposes

The Health and Safety Executive is inviting comments on whether there should be a requirement to report road traffic accidents that occur in the course of work. The government and employers will not want that! Any move which exposes the increase in accidents or bad health arising from long hours or unsafe work practices will cut into profits.

One factor pushing experienced drivers to break the law and drive long, unsafe hours in coaches with disconnected regpay. To earn enough money for a family to survive requires long hours.

Employers will cut every corner, and disregard every regulation and safety law for more profit. Only when those who work in

the industry control it will passengers and workers really be

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Please send me information about the WRP

Name	date
Address	
Trade union (if any)	Age (if under 21)

Send to: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

Unto those who have shall more be given!

Nothing

NatWest management had offered a performance related pay (PRP) deal, which will mean some, maybe most, of their staff getting nothing. BIFU want a 4 per cent across-

that John Melbourn, a group deputy chief executive, had a 40 per cent increase this year putting his pay up to £290,000 a

John Owen, chief executive of NatWest Markets, got £300,000 — another 40 per cent increase. Richard Goelitz, the group chief financial officer, got a rise in his basic salary from £200,000 to £250,000; but he was paid £554,238 in 1993, including a PRP bonus of £72,739 and £242,170 to cover the cost of moving from New York to London.

NatWest staff have noted BY PETER GIBSON

THE Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU) is taking the National Westminster bank to the ACAS arbitration service to get their members a pay increase.

the-board increase for all staff.

NatWest plans to cut 4,200 jobs this year, but not at the top!

Inside left

ook who's oming to inner

R a mere £500 per head, you and repartner could rub shoulders the Harpers at the Labour rty's gala dinner at London's rk Lane hotel this month. Peter reper is chairman of Hanson ustrial.

His boss Lord Hanson was ennod by Thatcher. This can't have any connection with Hanson st giving £100,000 to the Tory rty last year. Nor could Hanson bsidiary Imperial Tobacco's ation of 2,000 prime poster sites the Tories at the last election sibly have influenced governnt policy on tobacco adver-

Thousands of US coal miners re on strike last year against other Hanson subsidiary, Peaty Holdings, accusing it of closunion mines and sacking minso it could open new mines with union labour, and so design hard-won conditions.

Peabody is among the multinanal vultures eyeing what's left of British mining industry. Good ng there's no longer a represenive of the National Union of neworkers on the Labour Party cutive; it would be embarrasg if there were some spectres at feast!

rief encounter

London's May Day festival on pham Common, among visitors the Workers International to Red the Fourth International stall, s an earnest young fellow asking ether we characterise Serbia's losevic regime as a fascist state. He concedes that its actions in snia are fascist; but does it fit otsky's 'classical definition of cism'? Wasn't Milosevic a Stast? We argue that the real hisical movement seldom fits preus 'definitions' — witness events the former Soviet Union; Milosewouldn't be the first Stalinist to come a fascist; and the Serb ime's reactionary nationalism taken it halfway to fascism.

We recommend some reading, ticularly articles by our Serb mrade Radoslav Pavlovic in ious issues of the 'Internation-As our visitor is leaving, I ask belongs to any political group. I'm in USec,' he shrugs, meanthe United Secretariat of the urth International. (Unlike some ec members, he doesn't attempt lignify it by calling it 'the Fourth ernational'.)

What's USec's position on this stion?' I ask. 'Well, it depends ich section you ask!' he grins, ning to go. Seems the more ious some members of the 'Und' Secretariat are about their as, the less seriously they take ir organisation.

utshooting olice

w it can be told, at the risk of setting certain 'tankies' (hard-Stalinists) in the trade union vement, who support Serb gression but heave a pacifistic dder at the thought of workers puldering arms. Some Workers for Bosnia convoy members rited along to a shooting competin in Tuzla weren't content with tching, or cheering on friends. Three of them took part, beating osnian police team (though Tom ttersby modestly puts this down pot luck) to come second from bottom. Before anyone who has otted the occasional inaccuracy

my column says anything, no I

sn't in the side, fortunately!
Charlie Pottins

Three members of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International were recently invited to a conference held on 18 April in Pavlograd, Ukraine, of independent miners' unions from all regions of the former Soviet Union. This is the text of the letter the three submitted to the conference

To the Ukraine miners from British visitors to your conference.
Dear Comrades,

WE WRITE as British workers active in the trades unions, and as internationalists. We thank you for your invitation to the miners' conference in Pavlograd and we hope our participation in it will be another step towards uniting the workers' movement East and West for our common aims.

We write this letter to put forward proposals to develop our united action for common goals.

We salute the workers' movement in Ukraine and throughout the former Soviet Union. It is to the good of the working-class movement everywhere that it has made such great steps forward in the last few years. Above all, it has built workplace committees, strike committees and unions independent of the state, of government, of managers and employers.

The independence of workers' organisations is a fundamental principle which we share, one of the principles on which we can wage a common fight. We hope the proposals we put here will take this fight forward.

For an international conference of miners and energy workers

OUR first proposal is: to work together to organise an international conference of militant miners and energy workers, in line with the proposal already made on behalf of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International by our miner comrade, Dave Temple, in his open letter to Russian miners. This would be an important step towards united action for common goals.

All the struggles of miners and energy workers, East and West, point to the need for such a conference—none more so than your own struggle.

The hyper-inflation and the crisis of payments, which have led you to call a warning strike on 4 April, are not 'Ukrainian' problems but international problems. They are the results of decisions to open up the

former Soviet Union to the so-called 'free market', and the manner in which this opening-up has been conducted: an unrestricted freefor-all

Western companies are invited to plunder the economy and the resources of former Soviet republics — but none of them is prepared to provide what industry desperately needs: investment.

The general course of this 'opening-up' has been agreed to by both the Russian and Ukrainian governments. Among the vast majority of politicians and industrial managers—notwithstanding differences about the pace of this so-called 'reform'—no systematic opposition to this plunder has been voiced.

It is we, the working-class movement — Ukrainian, Russian, all nationalities — who must work out the means to resist closures and continued cuts in living standards.

You demand an assembly of the board of Gosugleprom [the nationalised coal industry] to include workers' representatives, and also to include the president and prime minister of Ukraine. We are certainly in favour of such an assembly, and you will no doubt use it for good purpose, to compel the president and prime minister to give specific commitments to the coal industry.

But we all know what promises from politicians are worth. We believe the most important thing is for workers' organisations to take on the problem of budgets, and demand control over these budgets. Any negotiations with Western or Ukrainian companies — whether about existing enterprises, or about natural resources — should be carried out only under the control of, and by agreement with, workers' organisations.

We believe this would be the first step to resisting the effects of plunder and colonisation.

This is exactly the kind of issue which requires common discussion, common action, between workers of all nationalities.

The demand you make, and which we agree with, that a viable price be set for Ukrainian coal, must also be discussed and developed on an international level.

As we all know, energy prices are determined by the world mar-

ket, to suit the needs of the large international corporations which supply the world's energy. These corporations can decide to shut down mines in one country, and invest in high-technology mining in another country where labour is cheaper because workers are poorer.

We need to develop links so that in these cases workers can take direct solidarity action to support each other. A general political strategy to advance the interests of energy workers, of all workers, is needed. The conference we propose could advance such common discussion and common action.

Since comrade Dave Temple wrote to you, miners in Hungary, Slovenia and Bosnia have expressed interest in this proposal. It has also been discussed with miners in Britain, France and Spain. We propose that when we visit Ukraine we take some further practical steps towards organising this conference

Material support for Tuzla miners

COMRADE Dave Temple's letter also referred to 'Workers Aid for Bosnia', the international campaign to send material aid to the people of Tuzla in Bosnia. This mining town has fought to maintain its multinational working-class character, despite the pressure on it from Serbian forces on one side and the United Nations on the other.

Eas

Ano

units

Since Dave Temple wrote to you, some of the 'Workers Aid' convoys which he told you about, taking aid from western European and Hungarian workers to the Tuzla workers, have arrived. As we write, another convoy is on its way with sections both from western Europe and a contingent of 70 trucks from the Slovenian miners.

The Tuzla miners' organisations report that they need not only food and supplies but also the equipment to restart production and prevent the collapse of their industry. They are in need of helmets, portable gas detectors, methane detectors, air velocity monitors, pressure monitors and other equipment.

Some British miners, and Hungarian miners, are now discussing organising a further convoy, specifically to get this equipment to

We propose to you to join this international campaign to support the Tuzla miners — to show them, not in words but with real practical aid, that the international working-class movement will not allow their community to be starved or broken up by the 'great powers' (Russia, France, Britain, the US etc.) which are trying to impose a settlement on Bosnia.

We make this proposal in the full awareness that you, too, are in a more or less desperate situation and may not be able to send material aid as you would want. But for the miners of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] to join the campaign for Tuzla would be of great importance.

Tuzla is the foremost among those communities in Bosnia which have refused to succumb to the pressures of national division, whose workers have refused to turn against each other in the name of divisive 'nationalism'. The Tuzla miners are the main force standing in the way of the permanent division of Bosnia that the 'great powers' and the Serbian regime seek to impose, a division which would be a serious defeat for the working class, East and West.

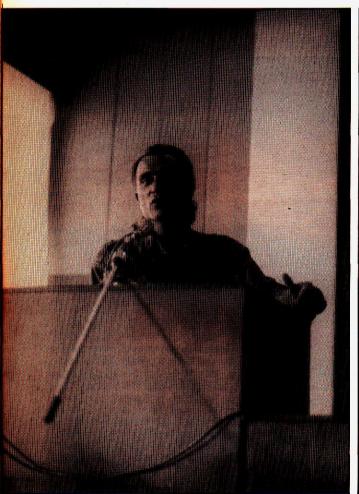
The pressure on Tuzla is now greater than ever, because of the formation of the Bosnian-Croat federation in Bosnia — which the UN sees as a step towards the permanent division of Bosnia.

In Bosnia itself, such a carve-up would legitimise the results of 'ethnic cleansing', which has been permitted by all the 'great powers'. It would strengthen the ruling cliques who seek to turn workers



Workers International member Simon Pirani speaking in Pavlograd at last month's miners' conference

ther step in of workers, t and West





Local Pavlograd miner Sasha (left) at the rostrum; and the meeting being opened by Vasily Mijasnikov, leader of the Pavlograd region of the Independent Miners Union

against each other, who want workers to cut each other's throats while bosses and bureaucrats feather their own nests.

In Serbia, it would strengthen the Milosevic regime — against which Serbian workers have fought before and during the war — while the misery and degradation of tnose workers increases with hyperinflation. Across Europe and the former Soviet Union, such a settlement would encourage fascism and dictatorship. For the miners of Ukraine, of the CIS, to join the international campaign for Tuzla would be important for another reason: it would be a clear declaration that the working class will not allow the catastrophe that has befallen the workers of the former Yugoslavia to be repeated in the former USSR, and that the working class will oppose the nationalist forces who would take it down that road.

We know that, after decades of the mistreatment of Ukraine, and the abuse of Ukrainian national rights, within the USSR, many Ukrainian workers believed that the country would be better off on its own. We accept that it is a fundamental right of nations to make their own future, but Ukrainian workers cannot make their

future together with the nationalism of the Kiev government or the new Ukrainian 'businessmen'. They must do it themselves, through their independent organisation, united with the workers of the former Soviet republics and all countries.

We also know that in Donbas the idea of 'autonomy' is being put forward as a solution to the desperate economic problems. It may appear that such autonomy, combined with closer links with Russia, could overcome many of the area's problems. But this is an illusion.

The economies of Russia and the whole of Ukraine have become more and more closely integrated over many decades. Moscow decided to smash up these economic ties, both to 'teach Ukraine a lesson' and to foster the divisions between workers. Those who want the 'autonomy of Donbas' would do still more damage to the economic ties, and deepen these divisions between workers still further.

It is in the interests of the working class *not* to break up that integrated economy, but to extend it in such a way that the technology existing in the West can be used to develop it. That is why the first step for the working class is to develop a strategy for the economy to be

reformed, under workers' control, and in the interests of all workers — Russian, Ukrainian, and others — and not in the interests of multinational companies which want to plunder the former USSR instead of developing it.

You, Ukrainian miners, who already have very close links with those in Russia, Byelarus, Kazakhstan and other former Soviet republics, are in a strong position to develop these links further, to embrace workers both East and West. For you to support the Tuzla miners will be a practical step on that road.

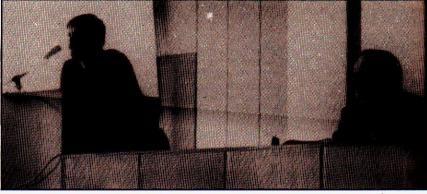
For an international workers' solidarity organisation

THE campaign to support Tuzla has shown the way forward for the working class: real, practical international solidarity — not the phoney 'solidarity' of trade union bureaucrats visiting each other and making speeches.

We believe this working-class internationalism needs a real organisational framework, and since 1991 we have worked to build the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign (ITUSC) for this purpose.

The ITUSC was initiated by our political organisation, the Workers International, on the basis of the principles of international solidarity, internal democracy within the

shows that such joint international action is possible. Such action is needed on many fronts — to support your own struggle against hyperinflation and closures, to support workers in South Africa struggling to ensure the independence of



A Kuzbass miners' leader addressing the conference

unions and independence of the unions from state and employers.

The purpose of the ITUSC was not to create a fake trade union 'front' for a political group, but to work towards an organisation in which militant workers can work together and discuss together for common aims and on common principles, who to you their politics.

principles, whatever their politics.
The campaign to support Tuzla

their organisations from the state, to support workers in Latin America fighting against child labour and super-exploitation.

We propose to you to work together to form an international organisation of militant workers along these lines.

John Ballantyne Keith Scotcher Simon Pirani

John Fordun

Dublin diary

THE sun shone dazzlingly on St Eithne's wings, and on the billowing clouds beneath... Or, to be more prosaic, it created a reflective glare on the propellor-shaft of an Aer Lingus Saab 340 as it flew at 24,000 feet above the Irish Sea.

I find the insistence of the Irish airline on naming its planes after saints unnerving. The higher they fly the more you think they are returning home to paradise, having abandoned terra firma for ever. Thankfully, St Eithne made it to the Emerald Isle.

Not, however, without considerable turbulence. 'Folks, welcome to Dublin!' announced the captain. 'Glad to have that over with, I'm sure! We're just basically waiting for a bus. We've called a bus and we're just, well, basically waiting for it to come from the terminal building.'

Basically, it took one helluva time to come; but when it got us to the arrivals door, we were through in a trice. No one even checked the identity papers of the passengers on EI257 from Edinburgh.

In the gents beside the baggage reclaim area, I came upon a symbol of the new Ireland. The condom machine offered two varieties. Neither, however, was the brand available when, for the first time in Dublin, I encountered such a public dispenser in a Temple Bar publast summer. It offered a culturally-conscious green packet, engagingly entitled 'The Irish Rover'.

THE opinions of cab drivers are the last resort of foreign correspondents desperate for copy. If they have found out little else, they endow the person who drove them from the airport with supervening wisdom, and the capacity to speak for the local populace.

* * * * *

Some form of united Ireland is now very much on the cards. This I can say on the basis of a 15-minute taxi-ride from Dublin airport to Trinity College. The real question is whether 'we' (that is, the citizens of the Republic) want 'them' (the people of the north of Ireland). And the main problem will be how to keep 'loyalist' violence under control.

Dick Spring, I can assure you from the same source, is 'finished'. On the face of it the leader of the Irish Labour Party, now Tanaiste (deputy premier) and foreign minister in Albert Reynolds's coalition government, is riding high. He led his party to a considerable success in the general election of November 1992, and was the major power-broker in the process that allowed the Fianna Fail leader to remain Taoiseach.

And there's the rub. A diversity of electors — from Dublin manual and professional workers to the rural and small-town middle classes — supported Spring's party because it seemed to represent something new. But, by keeping Reynolds in office after he had been rejected by the electorate, Spring has probably succeeded only in tarring Labour with the Fianna Fail brush.

The particular Labour Party scandal then recently in the headlines, however, had been reported mainly from the standpoint that Ireland's public morality is now more rational than Britain's. Gay junior minister, Emmett Stagg, had a brush with the police while lingering in a part of Phoenix Park with a certain reputation, but was not forced to resign. I gather that a number of Dublin pubs, however, sported notices: 'No Stagg parties here!'

ONE of Spring's calculations must have been that by taking on the Foreign Office, he would put his name in the history books by playing a leading role in finding what the British and Irish political establishments would both like to pass off as a 'solution' to the Northern Ireland question. John Major, in his pre-Christmas mode, seemed to be thinking along the same lines.

Spring and Major, however, operate in different contexts. In the mainstream Irish press you get a somewhat less hidebound level of analysis from that routinely churned out in Britain.

In the 'Sunday Business Post' (10 April), for example, commentator Tom McGurk argued that the interesting thing about the political game being played out over the Downing Street declaration was that Sinn Fein and the Tory Eurosceptics 'are the last people in Europe who think that Britain still exercises undiminished sovereignty'.

Major's humiliation over qualified majority voting in the European Union had, McGurk thought, given rise to a moment of history. In the course of a television discussion, the European social affairs commissioner had come on to dispel the idea that the British government had won concessions.

'What was extraordinary . . . for those of us who on this side of the Irish Sea have spent so long looking at history through the wrong end of the telescope,' McGurk wrote, was that the commissioner was 'a Mr P. Flynn from County Mayo. . . . Here was the man from Mayo telling the man who sits at Churchill's desk [Major] and the man who sits at Palmerston's desk [Foreign Secretary Hurd] who was now the boss.'

McGurk argued that 'the stranglehold of unionist political power' has gone for ever, although Major's weakness and need of Unionist support at Westminster are concealing this. With 'the concept of British sovereignty utterly changed within the European context', there now exists a third option to those of reforming (the 1960s civil rights movement perspective) or destroying (the IRA solution) the Northern Ireland state. This he calls 'the "agreed Ireland"".

What exactly is meant by this remains unclear. Even if some new administrative arrangement could be devised it would probably intensify rather than alleviate the economic problems of the working class, small farmers and traders of the whole island.

The 'Business Post' may simply reflect the political fantasies of the Dublin intelligentsia. But its perspective is at least more thought-provoking for socialists than most of what appears in the British media.

AND so to the Abbey. Here, at Ireland's National Theatre, even an indifferent play will usually tell you something about the state of Ireland. With Frank McGuinness's 'The Bird Sanctuary' (Geraldine McEwan, no less, in the lead) we were back to condoms.

'I would not let a man touch me,' expostulated a rather strait-laced female character, 'if he had a plastic bag on his cock.' Surprisingly the audience found this and similar lines sidesplittingly funny. But the Irish sense of humour, I predict, will overcome this temporary aberration caused by the sheath coming out of the closet.

And it is a development which has removed one more Protestant argument against being part of what was once the Pope's favourite country.

T.B.

Keep the flame alive!

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

WHEN the Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy arrived in the Bosnian mining town of Tuzla, a special appeal for books, journals, and all relevant literature was made to us at the town's university.

The lecturers and students — who are Serb, Croat and Muslim — have kept the university functioning under the most extreme and dreadful war conditions.

Not only do they not have enough to eat, both students and teachers alternate their studies with postings to the front line, where they fight the Serbian fascists.

An armed soldier in full battle-dress was introduced to us as the Dean of Philosophy — the relation between theory and practice clearly being much On this page and the facing page, BRONWEN HANDYSIDE and CHARLIE POTTINS interview people who have fought and are fighting for the independence of Bosnia

more direct in this part of the world.

The whole town is extremely proud of the university — founded in 1976 and being based on the industries which have been the mainstay of the town for generations, in particular the mines.

Out of the seven faculties, four are technical — chemical engineering, mining and geology, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering. The other three are economics, philosophy, and medicine. All of them need text books, and literature of every kind.

Sabid Zekan, international secretary of the students' union

in the faculty of mining and geology, said:

'All of the male students are soldiers. We spend one month at our studies, and one month at the front line.

'The Serbs destroyed my house, and my family had to flee to Zenica. I study my books in the mountains, and in my other hand I hold a gun.
'In my faculty we have Ser-

bian, Croatian and Muslim students. My home was destroyed by the Serbs — but the Serbs in Bosnia are occupied too. They hate the war as well, I know it.

My friends in western Bosnia are Serbian, they were at school with me, they write to me, and they hate the war.'
Zekan ended by saying: 'I
am sure the students of Europe
will help us.'

Part of the Workers Aid delegation which visited the university were Spanish. The university principal told them that the students' cultural club was named after a citizen of Tuzla—Svonto Ceric—who was killed fighting the fascists in Spain in the 1930s.

The appeal for literature and for cultural exchange cannot go unanswered from these courageous people. As part of their battle against the rebirth of fascism in Europe, they are struggling to keep the flame of knowledge and the development of human culture alive.

They need your help. Please contact Workers Aid for Bosnia on 071-582 5462 or 071-582 8834 (fax) if you can assist in any way.

Television

Sanitised anger and passion

THE BBC has recently thrown ITV executives into a minor panic by scheduling 'Eastenders' three nights a week, instead of twice. This hits ITV right where it hurts, in the battle for ratings, and the first week they responded by shoving in a James Bond film, the following week a special 'Coronation St' went in.

This provides an opportunity to take a look at the two heavyweight soaps, which loom up in early evening TV like two colossi. Each channel hopes you will switch to your favourite soap, and stay glued to that channel till midnight. This is rather unlikely, in the age of channel-hopping.

'Coronation St' (ITV, Wed-

recording St' (ITV, Wednesdays and Fridays) is an amazing phenomenon — I remember watching it 30 years ago when I was a schoolboy, yet here it is, with Ken Barlow still complaining about his lack of success with girls!

Compared with 'Eastenders', it is a much more amiable and jolly programme, with many touches of wry humour, and much Northern backchat.

Watching the last few episodes, I was also reminded of the feminist argument that soaps express a particularly female viewpoint, for the Street is full of powerful women, who are emotional and articulate. Without doubt this is matriarchal TV.

By contrast 'Eastenders' (BBC, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays) is very tough and abrasive. In fact, after watching a recent omnibus edition (Sundays) I felt battered.

There are so many quarrels, so many grim men uttering doom-laden threats. It is a fact that when 'Eastenders' was first planned, it was designed to appeal to men as well as women. This seems to work: I notice that teenage boys — who wouldn't been seen dead watch-

Review by Roger Horrocks



'Coronation St': 'a much more amiable and jolly programme'

ing 'Coronation St' — are often avid fans of Albert Square.

'Eastenders' has also been frantically controversial — bringing in issues such as AIDS, suicide, teenage pregnancy. It also had a stab at portraying black and Asian families, but black actors have complained about negative images of black families.

In the last ten years feminism—particularly in the US—has revolutionised the criticism of soaps (see for example, Tania Modleski's book Loving with a Venagance).

There are at least three important planks to the feminist reappraisal: first, the point already mentioned, that soaps present a feminine world, to do with intimacy and emotion, which is therefore despised by 'white male critics'.

Secondly, that soaps have

actually broken with standard Western narrative structure. They are full of disorder: every episode has to resolve certain problems and create new ones endlessly, without any ultimate denouement. Some US critics have argued that this is a new kind of 'TV aesthetic'.

A third point is that soaps are at the heart of the 'high culture' / 'mass culture' split in Western society. Along with romantic fiction, video nasties and computer games, they are demonised as 'bad', while reading 19th-century novels, watching Shakespeare, or listening to classical music is 'good'.

But for socialists, another important issue arises in relation to 'Coronation St' and 'Eastenders'. They both portray the working class, and presumably that's why they're so popular.

But what kind of view of the

soaps depoliticise workers considerably. In fact 'Eastenders' is full of self-employed people — hair-dressers, market-traders, pub landlords.

Is it a kind of Thatcherite vision of the working class, castrated politically, desperate to become 'bourgeoisified'? In addition, soaps are purely domestic dramas. They are full of emotional conflicts within families: in fact the family is the pivot around which they revolve.

One could argue therefore that this is a sanitised working class — angry certainly, passionate about life — but seen individually, not collectively, emotionally, not politically, centred in the family, not the factory.

But maybe this view is too ponderous or sectarian: after all, soaps provide relaxation and fun for people, and provide an intense emotional expression that is deeply satisfying.

These arguments are complex and important. I tend towards the feminist view: I think 'Coronation St' is great popular television. Watching 'Eastenders' at the moment is like being mugged by a 20-stone wrestler.



Sharon and Grant, 'Eastenders': 'like being mugged by a wrestler'

Programme guide



Michael Elwyn as Cromwell, Sat on C4

Saturday 7 May BITE THE BALLOT: 'Fireworks'. A drama of the birthpangs of democracy brought to life by the travelling theatre group Bread and Roses in Lewes, Sussex, on Bonfire Night 1993 (7.55pm, Channel 4).

Sunday 8 May ENCOUNTERS: 'Kangaroos — Faces in the Mob'. A year in the life of a group of wild Eastern Grey kangaroos in a beautiful valley on the east coast of Australia (7pm, Channel 4).

Monday 9 May 'That's Football!' Film-maker Carl Ross spent a season with promotion-seeking Swindon Town exploring the relationships and politics of professional football, where the dreams of glamour, adoring fans and high wages are often reduced to the mundane (11pm, Channel 4).

Selected films

MILLER'S CROSSING (1990). The Coen brothers' complex and original 1930s gangster film. With Gabriel Byrne, Marcia Gay Harden and Albert Finney (Sunday, 10pm, Channel 4). CRIES AND WHISPERS (1972). Set in turn-of-the-century Sweden, this story of a dying woman and her sisters is Ingmar Bergman's most uncompromising and emotionally-driven film. With Harriet Andersson, Ingrid Thulin and Liv Ullman (Sunday, 12.10am, Channel 4). PARTING GLANCES (1986). Written and directed by the late Bill Sherwood, who brings a refreshing look at homosexual relationships where AIDS is regarded simply as another, albeit tragic, facet of gay life (Friday, 12.05am, Channel 4).

JJ

A partisan still marching

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

AMONG the workers marching in south London on May Day last Sunday was a 68-year-old retired print mechanic whose fight against fascism began in his Bosnia homeland over 50 years ago. Esad Jordanovic was 17 when, in 1943, he joined the Yugoslav partisans fighting Nazi occupation.

On May Day Esad marched with other Bosnians, some too young to have ever associated the red star with ideas of liberation. A placard he had written said: 'Stop novi Hitler Zhirinovski', 'Stop the new Hitler, Zhirinovsky', referring to the Russian nationalist leader, a declared admirer of Hitler, who backs the Serb onslaught on Bosnia.

The ex-partisan wants to tell the workers' movement, and the younger generation particularly, about the real international significance of the Bosnian people's struggle, and the danger of fascism in Europe. 'I have spent my whole life fighting fascism. In World War II I fought Hitler's fascists. Today we are fighting [Serb] Chetnik fascism. Today it's Bosnia; tomorrow it could be Macedonia, Kosovo, and perhaps Albania.

Destroyed

'If we don't stop Serbia now, in the next five years it will be Zhirinovsky who gains the advantage. Remember, Hitler did not have atomic weapons. Russia does. Today, Mostar and Sarajevo are destroyed; tomorrow, it could be Paris or London.'

Esad's home town is Zenica, in central Bosnia. Having joined Tito's partisan army, he also fought in the north and still speaks some Slovene, as well as his native Bosnian variety of 'Serbo-Croat'.

'In the partisans we were all mixed, Muslim, Croat, Serb. Tito was popular because he took all peoples and joined them together to fight against fascism. In the Bosnian army today we have Serbs and Croats, as well as Muslims. Even when there was fighting between Croats and Muslims, like at Mostar, we had a Croat brigade in Tuzla region fighting for Bosnia.'

When Esad Jordanovic returned from the war in 1946, he became an organiser for the Communist Party's youth movement. But he also found his struggles were not over. 'Muslim people still did not have national rights, and Bosnia's status was less than that of Croatia or Serbia. Tito wanted to unite every nation in Yugoslavia, but to keep power. He had a very strong police.'

Arrested

Esad spent three years in the forces, working as a flight mechanic at a military airfield. Three times he applied for a pilot's licence to fly light aircraft. Each time he was turned down, with no reason given. 'I was a Muslim. If I'd been a Serb, I'd have been given a chance. But the Serbs wouldn't tolerate any other nationality in the higher ranks of the forces.'

Ironically, Esad was arrested in 1948 for opposing Stalin's Cominform [the Communist Information Bureau, set up in September 1947], which expelled the Yugoslav Communist Party later the same year. 'Stalin was pressing Yugoslavia to enter a military pact. Because I was a partisan fighter, I did not oppose socialism; but Russia did not care about how people were living, Stalin only cared for power. I had fought against Hitler, and in 1948 I saw Stalin was prepared to use the same means as Hitler.'

Esad was sent to prison as a member of the Young Muslim organisation and for wanting a multi-party system. He spent six months in Sarajevo's central prison and a further 18 months at a smaller prison. Because he was an ex-partisan, and for his good behaviour, he was released. At the urging of his old partisan comrades, the authorities acknowledged he was not a threat to national security and he was rehabilitated.

'We were not against com-

'We were not against communism,' he insists, 'but we said we must have more than one party. If Tito did best, he would remain president. Tito was a Croat, and personally a good man. But the ministers around him were mostly Serbs. In Yugoslavia, Serbs held important positions in the army, government, management.

key. Later Tito removed him. 'Later, Milovan Djilas, who

had been a partisan leader with Tito right from the start, asked for a multi-party system. He was arrested, spent two or three years in prison in Belgrade, then had to leave the country, and live in America. He came back, and was reconciled with Tito.

'Now he is home in Montenegro, and he fights against [Serbian President] Milosevic politically. Many Montenegrin people are against fascism, but they lack power.' [Montenegro is part of the rump controlled by Serbia.]

After his release from pris-

periods with ice-cold water dripping on his forehead, till he feared for his sanity. Tried in secret, he was sentenced to five years.

In 1962 Yugoslavs were asked to register their nationality. In the 1968 census they were asked whether they were Croat, Serb or Slovene, but not until 1971 was 'Muslim' recognised as a national category. 'When the Turks ruled the Balkans, we were just ''Bosniaks'', but under Austria-Hungary we were classified as Serb, Croat or Muslim.'

In 1957, after Esad's prison ordeal, friends helped him find work at the Sarajevo daily sponsible for massacres, we must bring them to justice, it does not matter who it is, president or whoever. If [Serb fascist] Arkan, Milosevic or [Bosnian Serb leader] Karadzic escape justice, they or others like them will do these things again. We must say "Never again!" In the United Nations, I think they defend these Serbs, legitimise what they're doing.

'I will try to teach people not to hate other nationalities. Not all Serbs are Chetniks, just part of them, but that party has power. In the Bosnian army we have a Serb commander and we have a Croatian, Schreiber. We have Croats, Serbs, Jewish people, Gypsies and others serving together.'

Support

Esad Jordanovic was pleased to hear about the Scottish TUC's decision to help Bosnia, and about Workers Aid for Bosnia's campaign for support from the British TUC. It's not just that trades unions could render badly needed humanitarian help to his people, but that he sees the link between the struggle for union rights and the battle against Stalinism and fascism.

'In our country the unions did not have a chance to say "We defend the working class". Tito had an island, Brioni, with a very nice palace, and a yacht. Others did not live so well. We did not have strong unions.' In a crisis, the bureaucrats tried to maintain their privileges by becoming Serb nationalists. 'Each defends himself or herself, not

the working class.
'They held out the dream of a Greater Serbia. [Croatia's President] Tudjman and Milosevic had a meeting to discuss how to divide Bosnia, between Croat and Serb. Tudjman asked for Herzegovina.'



Esad Jordanovic (in centre in dark glasses) on the May Day march in London last weekend

Serbs, even if they had low education, were promoted to top jobs.'

'Towards the end of the war, if a Serb was a Chetnik, or a Croat had been an Ustashe [that is, a fascist], they could join the partisans and, after it took power, the party.

'Tito did not discriminate against any nationality, but his ministers did. Someone like Rankovic, who had committed the same crimes as Draza Mihailovic [the Chetnik commander] in killing many Muslims in Bosnia and Albania, after 1944 joined the partisans. Tito took him on as a minister. 'As a minister he carried out ethnic cleansing of the Sandjak, sending a million people to Tur-

on, Esad Jordanovic went home to Zenica, worked in the youth organisation and as a driving instructor. But his troubles weren't over. Because of police harassment he had to leave town, going to Zagreb where he obtained a job as a printing mechanic at the newspaper 'Vjesnik'. 'But my prison record followed me, wherever I went.'

Police harassment kept him on the move from job to job, town to town, till he'd had enough. 'In the 1950s I decided to go over the Alps to Austria. But I was caught by guard dogs on the border. I was held at Kranj in Slovenia, then sent to Sarajevo prison again.' This time Esad was subjected to prolonged torture, being held down for long

'Oslobodenje' ('Liberation'), and he stayed there for six years, still under police surveillance. In 1964, he returned to Zenica, and married. He was in Britain on a visit to his son when the war broke out in Bosnia. He still has another son in Zenica, and a sister in Tuzla.

'After this war finishes. I will

return. I've been a fighter all my life. I'm too old to fight now, and not in good health, but I want to fight fascism politically. I want to talk to young people about the dangers of nationalism and fascism. Because we cannot forget 30,000 people are dead, and 2 million refugees.

'Because a Serb massacred Muslims we do not want to reply in kind. But if someone is re'If we'd had a strong international trade union movement we could have stopped this war in Bosnia.'

Film review

The remains of aristocratic culture

TOM OWEN sees a film, 'The Remains of the Day', that looks under the surface of an aristocratic British household in the 1930s

THE OTHER day I happened to see that bizarre figure Lord Longford, the 'Labour peer', deliver a eulogy to the aristocratic virtues of the House of Lords: politeness, civility and erudition were the chief qualities that had been nurtured there over 1,000 years of civilised tradition.

On the same Channel Four programme, Roy Hattersley, self-confessed lifelong opponent of the 'other place', commented that their lordships were always indulging in these claims.

Asked by the ever flippant Andrew Rawnsley whether he would refuse a peerage. Hattersley replied that this would be a purely personal decision: whether to submit to the line of the Labour Party or to the allure of his Sheffield Wednesday season ticket. Surely a poignant conflict of powerful interests!

If Longford and Hattersley represent to us a peculiar manifestation of the alliance of Liberalism and the aristocracy of labour, then what about the remains of the real aristocracy?

Well, there is plenty of evidence of their remains: the great houses with their art treasures, gardens and cultured landscapes like that of Chatsworth House, which Capability Brown designed to flourish for a millennium, as he believed his patrons would.

This 'civility' of the aristocratic remains would not blind anyone to the

fact that they have been thoroughly integrated into capitalist forms of ownership and commercial agricultural production for more than three centuries.

Other aspects of their culture, such as their 'country pleasures', link them back directly to their progenitors, the robber barons.

That other side of the aristocratic culture — arrogance, brutality, decadence, and philistinism — still find their expression in the exemplary behaviour of the aspiring lordling of the Blenheim estate, the Marquess of Blandford.

By sheer chance I was fortunate to see an immensely absorbing and penetrating film which dealt with the political role and function of a section of the aristocracy in the 1930s: "The Remains of the Day", starring Anthony Hopkins, Emma Thompson and James Fox.

On the surface it was one of those films in which nothing seemed to happen but which gripped your attention for nearly three hours. It is set in the late 1920s and the following two decades, and follows the fortunes of a large country house in Oxfordshire, 'Dartington Hall'.

The main focus appears to be on the relationship between the head butler, played by Hopkins, and the housekeeper, played by Thompson.

What seems to be the usual 'upstairs-downstairs' format is in fact an oblique mechanism for the exploration of much larger social, political and moral issues — of the crisis which was to engulf Europe and the rest of the world in the barbarism of fascism and war.

Initially the world of the film is presented through the moral and political myopia of the figures played by Hopkins and Thompson.

Hopkins, usually an actor who relishes parts to which he can bring bravura and that impassioned eloquence the Welsh call hwyl, produces a magnificent portrait of a limited, repressed and 'spiritually' inadequate individual: a 'gentleman's gentleman'.

If he is invisible in his public role as a retainer, he is highly visible as the sergeant-major of the servant classes, whom he polices through the elaborate rituals of deference.

Absurdity

The film has some wonderful moments of absurdity, like the daily ironing of 'The Times' or the precise measuring of the positions of wine glasses and plates on a banqueting table.

The housekeeper is first presented as a competent young career woman who is less concerned with the arcane house culture than with efficiently managing a large domestic workforce.

But she begins to show her limitations under the emotionally and sexually repressed regime of this manorial institution. If the butler seeks consolation in moments of privacy and sentimental novels, she looks for some form of satisfaction in an emotional relationship with an ex-employee who has gained some political independence from the regime. But this break is only achieved after a humiliating moral crisis.

The aristocrat, played by James Fox, is first presented sympathetically as a cultured and 'liberal' representative of his class, guided by a sense of

'What is so powerful about the film is not just the sense of waste, but the way in which politics breaks into domestic life with such devastating effect.'

'honour'. Through a fragmentary view of the servant classes' routine we begin to see the disastrous consequences of his intellectual and political blindness.

He is a Germanophile racked with guilt about the humiliating conditions imposed by the allies on the Germans after World War I.

As the narrative unfolds we see that he has become a catalyst for the appeasement faction of the British ruling class, offering his country seat as a centre for political intrigue and secret diplomacy, at first with the European powers and the US over the rearmament question, later with the Nazis and their British sympathisers, the blackshirts.

The moral crisis which politicises the domestic life of the house is the aristocrat's decision to sack two young women, Jewish refugees from Germany, whom he had previously given refuge as servants. This means their inevitable deportation and destruction.

Threatens

The butler hides his responses and claims that the master, in his infinite wisdom, knows best.

The housekeeper threatens to resign, but is too afraid to face the world and its insecurities. It is after this personal defeat that she chooses marriage, to an incompatible partner.

After World War II the aristocrat dies a broken man, dishonoured as a traitor, his estates taken over by a wealthy American who had attended the pre-war conferences as a critic of British amateurism in the world of 1930s realpolitik.

The butler tries to persuade the housekeeper to return to her former role, but she is drawn back to her ex-husband solely to look after her new grandchild.

What is so powerful about the film is not just the sense of waste, but the way in which politics breaks into domestic life with such devastating effect. Above all, it shows how ruling-class and aristocratic 'politeness and civility' are also a mask for barbarism.

Saturday 7 May 1994

Newsdesk 071-582 8882

Analysing the South African election in the light of the revolutionary upsurge of the 1980s, BILL HUN-TER dissects the mistakes of 'Militant' writer Peter Taffe and asks: What next in South Africa?

THE colonial revolutions which broke up the great imperialist empires in Africa after World War I were stopped short. Now, throughout Africa, most governments are in the hands of local capitalist rulers directly or indirectly bound to imperialist combines in joint exploitation of the masses of the people.

Which way will the revolution in South Africa go? The way of Zimbabwe, Zaire, Nigeria, Algeria? Or is the revolution of the masses that made a great surge forward in the 1980s going to be carried on to workers' government and socialism, which were then being demanded?

That great 1980s upsurge built powerful trades unions which had 'Socialism' and 'Workers' Charter' on their banners. These unions expressed the mass demand for the end of capitalism and the victory of a black government that would nationalise the industries.

By the conditions in which it was formed, the South African working class could not but be

The power of the masses, however, brought South Africa's rulers to the edge of crushing defeat. At that point Mandela was released (in 1990), as South African and world capitalism decided that the only way to avoid catastrophe was with the help of the African National Congress (ANC) leaders and the South African Commun-

ist Party (SACP). Even in the 1980s, the ANC leaders were meeting regularly and quietly with sections of 'liberal' South African and Western businessmen; and at the end of 1988 the ANC leaders began amending the Freedom Charter, which had been adopted in 1955.

In mid-1989, the big unions in COSATU were demanding that the ANC have a Workers' Charter, since the Freedom Charter represented a limited programme which did not, in itself, guarantee working-class emancipation.

It was a major task of the Communist Party to divert this movement and bring about the

'The South African CP became a major instrument in persuading the trade union leaders to support the ANC leaders' betrayal of the workers' socialist demands.'

imbued with a deep hatred, not only of apartheid racist brutality but also of the monopolies and smaller capitalists who benefited from state repression.

The advance guard of South African workers was also critical of the road taken by other African states, such as Zimbabwe, where independence had meant the growth of a local capitalist class, repression of workers' democratic rights, and continued economic domination by multinational corpor-

In the insurrectionary upsurges of the 1980s, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) grew, together with wide and combative movements in the townships and homelands, where men, women and children struggled unceasingly against instigated thuggery, arrests and murders, and for the right to speak, meet and organise.

The state brutally tried to destroy organisations and leaders and terrorise the mass of the population.

COSATU was banned from political activity. Union offices were bombed and leaders abducted and detained. Vigilantes killed workers with the help

political corruption of those leaders with a record of struggle.

cause there was no alternative national leadership able to organise workers in a conscious struggle for a workers' policy against the ANC leadership allied with the SACP.

The South African CP became a major instrument in persuading the trade union leaders to support the ANC leaders' betrayal of the workers' socialist demands.

According to the Stalinists, there had to be a 'two-stage' struggle: first, freedom from apartheid; then socialist demands.

The ANC began to change even the vague phrases of the Freedom Charter, to oppose nationalisation and radical land reform, which would return the lands stolen from black South Africans who had been moved far from their traditional homes.

Mandela and the ANC leaders have agreed with F.W. de Klerk on a coalition government - 'power-sharing' — which they have declared is for five years. But leading commentators are saying that it will have to exist indefinitely.

Meanwhile the delay in their revolution has already cost the

They had some success, be-An ANC-led national unity government will not be able to meet the expectations of the working class in South Africa

dear. Unemployment has grown; living conditions have worsened for the black popula-Yet, in a confused article in the January-February issue of

'Militant International Review', Peter Taffe adopts the 'twostage' theory of Stalin and asserts that the South African revolution is now passing through a democratic phase.

'This revolution', he writes, 'has not been "aborted", diverted into "safe channels", but is presently going through a democratic phase. Such periods when there is a lull or the movement appears to have receded is an unavoidable phase in any revolution. Such was the period which followed the February revolution in Russia or during the Spanish revolution of 1931-37.

Taffe describes the period, incorrectly, as one of dual power. However, even in the February revolution of 1917. when there was certainly dual power, the most important question for Lenin was not the 'democratic' phase but the independence of the working class and the necessity for the soviets to take power.

The most important thing for Taffe, however, is that the ANC should be supported and 'fully' tested out. Everything must be subordinated to victory for the

Thus he attacks the demand for a workers' party as premature, declaring that the working class has first to test out the ANC in action.

So he is found in the position of Stalin in Trotsky's historic struggle (1926-27) against the liquidation of the Chinese Communist Party that was demanded by the [nationalist] Kuomintang leaders; Trotsky insisted that an alliance in the Kuomintang with Chiang Kai-shek was a betrayal if the political independence of the working class

was not preserved. Taffe is against taking forward the experiences that the

South African workers have been making. While Mandela was negotiating with De Klerk, workers struggling against their oppressors have clashed with the ANC leaders and criticised Mandela's concessions.

In the teeth of the ANC leaders' reluctance, they forced a

of the most powerful and militant unions in COSATU, after a stormy discussion at its conference, passed a resolution demanding nationalisation without compensation - and there was strong support for a workers' party

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What next in

South Africa?

Taffe takes the election as 'While Mandela was negotiating, workers struggling against their oppressors have clashed with the ANC leaders and

> criticised Mandela's concessions.'

austerity plan. There were calls

for the arming of workers and for a general strike against the government when peaceful demonstrators were massacred in Ciskei.

This is the independent movement of workers which Taffe in practice says it is wrong to give leadership to.

The South African CP opposed and opposes the independent political representation of workers' organisations, subordinating them to the ANC. It defeated or politically corrup-ted leaders of the COSATU who in the past sought political independence in the ANC and fought for a Workers' Charter.

The South African CP, which grew after Mandela's release as workers began to be critical of the other ANC leaders, opposed the Workers' Charter and declared that 'first we must get democracy and then we can talk

Nor is it just 'sects', as Taffe claims, that are raising the demand for a workers' party. The National Union of Metal Workers, which has always been one

mass strike against De Klerk's meaning majority rule and the end of apartheid — even though he is forced to talk of the ANC already agreeing to 'powersharing' for five years, and asks the question:

'How long before the ANC government sends in the police and army units against striking workers or rebellious inhabitants of the African townships?'

This question is purely rhetorical. Taffe does not concentrate on warning revolutionary workers, and the South African working class generally, to build now in preparation for

On the contrary, to him there is an objective perspective of two stages: first, the coalition; and then '[p]ressure will grow for a homogeneous ANC government and undoubtedly that would develop at a certain stage. . . . The plan for a five-year time-scale can be considerably shortened under mass pressure.

Nowhere does Taffe propose the demand that the ANC should refuse a coalition and form a government. His article is not that of a revolutionary leader but one written by somebody in a watch-tower.

So he gives a picture of objective conditions bringing in reforms, when the extremely explosive processes move towards revolution. In fact he repeats several times that reforms will be granted to the masses - concessions on health and housing with the help of international capital'.

It is not just 'pressure growing'. Even before the election was over, British television was showing scenes outside South African townships of black families staking out government land into equal plots on which they were now going to build homes.

A Mandela government is not going to be able to drive these movements back by demagogy. History gives them an explosive content for years, and even within the memory of young black South Africans there have been brutal evictions of black people from the land.

The great upsurges which brought the vote and have been temporarily stopped short of victory nevertheless brought a confidence to the South African masses.

The new South African government can no more solve the problems of poverty and unemployment than that of Zimbabwe. It must very shortly be revealed as a government of

The most urgent task is the construction of a leadership that will lead forward the independent movement of the working class on the road of the revolution they desired in the 1980s.

That the masses of South Africa will explode in struggle there is no doubt whatever. Our duty is to help them build a leadership that can carry that struggle forward to victory - a victory that will be a beacon to their suffering and oppressed brothers and sisters elsewhere on the African continent.

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