

Government threatens safety ALL OUT TO WIN SIGNAL DISPUTE

Durham Miners Gala 1994



Bosnian musicians and Workers Aid for Bosnia supporters marched on the annual Durham Miners Gala along with other banners and bands from the workers' movement. They were warmly received when they performed under the Royal County hotel balcony where guests of the North East area National Union of Mineworkers listen to the bands — see page 3.

RAILTRACK bosses are being egged on by the Tory government to bust the signal workers' strike by opening signal boxes and getting managers to operate them. The train drivers' union ASLEF has expressed concern over the safety of its members and train passengers and questioned the competence of managers to do the work.

BY THE EDITOR

But for the government breaking this strike is more important than safety. Their limit on public sector pay is at risk.

The government broke up the previously agreed 5.7 per cent pay deal between Railtrack and the signal workers' union, RMT, because they knew that if it went through they could face a general offensive on public sector pay.

If Railtrack, acting on behalf of the government, can impose their new pay package, which would result in a wage cut for some signal workers, then the possibility of other workers coming forward in struggle would recede.

Railtrack bosses were boasting that they would get 3,000 out of the usual 15,000 services on the rails. But with only one fifth of the services working most people rightly decided to travel by other means and traffic jams in London were the worst since the strikes began.

ASLEF's conference a few weeks ago rejected a 2.5 per cent pay claim and industrial action seems likely. But ASLEF's leadership

hides behind the anti-union laws to say there is nothing they can do to organise solidarity action — except continue to draw its salary paid for by members' contributions.

All attempts to co-ordinate strike action to bust the anti-union laws, like during the fight against pit closures in 1992-93, are fought against tooth and nail by the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracies.

Build

It's not just train drivers but all public sector workers that have an interest in winning the signals' strike. Those who want to build the working-class movement must strive, against the trade union and Labour bureaucracies, for this unity of action.

■ Glenda Jackson and another Labour MP met the head of London Underground last week to express concern that recommendations following the King's Cross disaster in the late 1980s have still not been carried out. There are still a number of wooden escalators in operation.

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Water rats

WE ALL need water: to quench our thirst, to boil an egg, to clean our teeth, to wash our bodies and our clothes, and for 101 other purposes. Water, like air, is one of life's basic necessities.

At the end of 1989 the water industry in England and Wales was privatised. Ten new water companies and their operating subsidiaries — water service companies — replaced the nine regional water authorities in England and the Welsh Water Authority. Of the 99 per cent of the population of England and Wales who are connected to a public water supply, 75 per cent are supplied by the new companies (the rest are supplied by companies which were already in the private sector).

Since privatisation, reported the National Consumer Council this week, household water bills have soared by an average of 67 per cent. Customers have paid £2 billion more than they would have paid had charges kept in line with inflation.

The increases have hit low-income households most savagely of all. A household on income support, it is calculated, will spend 3.2 per cent of its disposable income on water this year, as against 2.5 per cent in 1989.

Take the area where charges are highest, south-west England. Here the average water bill grabs 4.9 per cent of the income of a household of two adults and two children; 7.6 per cent of the income of a single parent and child; and a swingeing 9.1 per cent of a single pensioner's income.

Says the report: 'These figures represent a substantial financial strain on households that are least able to afford price increases for essential services.'

* * * * *

WHERE have these colossal amounts of money gone? On much-needed investment, perhaps, to clean up our far from wholesome water supply and meet European standards of water quality?

Not a bit of it. The National Consumer Council says that the customers have paid for most of such investment as there has been.

Privatisation was supposed to free the companies to raise money for investment on the financial markets, but it turns out that comparatively little has been raised in that way.

The companies have simply enjoyed a huge profits bonanza. Their aggregate operating profits have soared from £1,088.3 million in 1989-90 to £1,869.5 million in 1992-93. This was a rise of 20 per cent a year between those dates, and a rise in profit margins from 28.7 per cent to 35.6 per cent.

The industry's share value is now around £13 billion, as against £5.2 billion in 1989. And, over the five-year period, gross dividend payments to shareholders shot up by about 63 per cent a year.

* * * * *

THIS is a major public scandal. There is only one word to describe people who are in a position to corner a basic necessity of life, and who choose to profiteer from it with such cynicism. They are rats.

Two other things need emphasis. By refusing to make the renationalisation of the water industry a basic plank in their programme, the leaders of the Labour Party are turning their backs, once again, on fundamental socialist principles.

What contempt the pioneers of socialism would have had for these gentry, who won't lift a finger to ease the plight of the old age pensioner who dreads the coming of the water bill that he or she knows will eat up nearly 10p of every £1 of his or her pension.

Lastly, the workers of eastern Europe should note this example of privatisation in practice. There is a serious lesson here for them, and they would do well to take heed of it.

Letters

The feeling behind the Durham gala

LAST week's 110th miners' gala in Durham — the Big Meeting — will certainly not be the last if the strength, feeling and determination of everyone there was anything to go by.

Miners, ex-miners, their children, their families, and the trade union movement came out in their thousands to support one of the great rallies of the North East. No way were they going to let the Tories defeat this great tradition.

The miners, with backs stiff and heads held high, carried their banners with pride as they marched through the city centre to the racecourse ground, each banner accompanied by a brass or pipe band.

The usual array of dignitaries — the mayor, trade union leaders and Labour MPs — were on the Royal County Hotel's balcony to greet them as they passed, while each band played at least two tunes, to the enjoyment of the waiting crowds. John Prescott was there, no doubt seeking support in his fight for the Labour Party leadership contest.

If ever there was a political message in last week's event, it was that the miners and the working class are not defeated. As the saying goes: 'There's life in the old dog yet.'

This gala must not be allowed to die.

Alan Clark
London SE18

Anguish of a human tragedy

FURTHER to your article 'Drunks in the boardroom?' (Workers Press, 25 June), I would like to tell you about my 35-year-old son, Robert, who was sacked in May after 12 years' service.

He was taken on as a bus driver in 1981 by the company which owns all the buses, trams and underground trains in Brussels. Two years ago he had an accident at home. He fell through an aquarium, cutting his leg down to the bone. After a month he returned to work, but he could not drive again.

Instead he was transferred to the underground. Confined to a cage, he sold tickets and gave advice to passengers. After six months he hated this job so much he began to drink, thinking it would make him feel a little better.

In May he had a problem with a passenger, and suddenly had a nervous breakdown. Considering my son's behaviour scandalous, the company sacked him immediately.

They sent him a letter

terminating his contract, and sent the dole a letter stamped 'Found drunk at work'. That ensured he would receive no dole for months, if ever.

This is a catastrophe for him and his family, knowing the difficulties in finding other work. There are around 1 million unemployed workers in Belgium!

Yet I remember the managers of the company where I worked always had bottles of alcohol in their office, 'to offer a glass to visitors, agents, purchasers and so on'.

It is allowed for them! Yet they say to workers: 'Do not drink at work, however bad your conditions, or you will be punished! Your rights will be cut and your family plunged into poverty!'

It is easy to understand that the terrible conditions faced by workers can drive some of them to drink, but they should know the dangers of drinking at work.

Seeing my son without work makes me sick and anguished. It is a human disaster.

Marie-Jeanne Guermant
Brussels

Jobs occupy workers' minds

CONGRATULATIONS to David Eyre for his article on the 'Scottish road' (Workers Press, 9 July).

I too was not supportive of 'Scotland United', and wrote to the local press that what was needed was neither Labour nor Home Rule but Workers' Rule. My former colleagues in the Communist Party were joining, as usual, anything that smacked of popular support.

SU is now dead as the dodo. In reality it is jobs that occupy the minds of the workers.

I go along with his critique of the Labour Party and the Scottish TUC, but what the Scottish working class did or did not do during the poll tax era needs more careful examination.

It is difficult to find evidence to substantiate Eyre's claim that 'The working class itself organised new community-based forms outside the Labour movement'. It would be truer to say that some sections, alongside some sections of the middle-class, did just that.

With the poll tax Thatcher attacked the better-off section of the working class and the middle class — her own supporters, who forced the Tories to change their minds.

David is 100 per cent correct when he reminds us that internationalism is the way forward against today's monopoly capitalism, which seeks to transcend all national borders.

I would like to elaborate further, but am mindful of your caution to 'keep it short'.

John P. Mathieson
Glenrothes, Fife

Not just fine words

ANYONE who loftily dismisses the imperialist mass bombing of Iraq as merely 'the master' whipping the 'lackey into obedience', as A. Thomas does (Letters, 9 July), clearly writes from some Olympian height, detached from the struggles of us mere mortals.

Perhaps this explains why he airily assumes that those of us who sided with Iraq against our own imperialist masters, 'obviously' did not support the struggle of the Kurdish people and Iraqi workers against Saddam Hussein's regime.

Unlike most of the British media, Workers Press did not wait till British oil interests were threatened before discovering that Saddam Hussein had gassed Kurdish villagers. When Kurdish militants organised demonstrations, we were there. And when the Kurdish workers set up *shuras* (revolutionary councils) in the aftermath of the war, it was Workers Press that publicised them and their programme.

The struggle against imperialism is not a matter of indifference for socialists. We place no confidence in the national bourgeoisie to head that struggle.

To draw a rough analogy, the Bolsheviks attacked bourgeois vacillation before Tsarism, not to affect neutrality, but to assert working-class hegemony in the struggle. 'Using Kerensky as a gun-rest to destroy Kornilov' was just one step in overthrowing Kerensky, so putting Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution into practice.

Anyone who has followed Workers Press as long as A. Thomas has should know that the Workers International, of which the WRP forms part, is in contact with Kurdish, Iraqi, Iranian and, of course, Argentinian workers. Only the other week we joined Iranian refugee workers in a demonstration in London. We listen carefully to the experiences and views of such militants, as we do to our comrades in Namibia and South Africa.

For them, 'political independence of the working class' means a life-and-death struggle, not just fine words designed to excuse accommodation to social chauvinism in imperialist Britain. Rebuilding Trotsky's Fourth International means establishing real sections in the course of the struggle, not just magic formulas at the end of letters from afar.

Charlie Pottins
London SW1

Sneers and jeers

RAYMOND CHALLINOR's article on D-Day and after (Workers Press, 2 July) was illustrated with a photo of an ex-serviceman collecting his 'demob suit'. The caption read:

'In 1944 the problem was demobilisation — not recruitment.'

But 'in 1944' the war was still very much in progress, and there could be no question of demobilisation until it was over, well into 1945, as Challinor mentions. Even then, as I recall, much ill-feeling was expressed by British soldiers in the Far East, as late as Christmas 1945, at the slowness of the demob process (which in our case, of course, involved repatriation over a long distance) — partly because of the shortage of available shipping.

Challinor writes with approval of activities that were consciously aimed at hindering the Anglo-American war effort. (Hitler might well have remarked about these doubtless sincere 'anti-fascists': With enemies like these, who needs friends?) Yet, quite apart from any other considerations, Trotskyists ought to be grateful for D-Day.

Had the Western allies not launched their invasion when they did, all western Europe would either have remained under Hitler's boot or fallen under Stalin's. In either case the region's Trotskyists would have faced eventual extermination.

As things actually worked out, the restoration of 'bourgeois democracy' in France, west Germany, etc., by the armies of Eisenhower and Montgomery meant that quite a few of them survived to form and re-form their Internationals, publish their journals — and commemorate D-Day with sneers and jeers.

Brian Pearce
Barnet

Illusion trick

FOLLOWING Charlie Pottins's article ('All bull and business babble', 2 July) on buzz-words used by business organisations to disguise their true meaning, I can add two that I find really irritating.

Have you noticed how financial companies like to be referred to as part of an insurance industry or a pensions industry, as though they were actually manufacturing something tangible, something produced by a manufacturing process?

Have you also noticed that — following their own crazy logic — these same 'industries' produce products instead of policies. Even the Post Office National Savings invited savers to choose from one of their many 'products' on offer.

All this sums up the state of true manufacturing in Britain today, where a load of highly paid executives can sit round all day on their shiny fat arses, dreaming up ways to justify their existence and delude themselves that they are actually producing something worthwhile.

David Maccini
London SW18

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SOME 'personal' columns in this paper describe the experiences of the Durham miners' galas, past and present. I don't intend to buck this trend — although it might be considered presumptuous to consider the weekly fund report as my 'personal' column!

I stood for a time in the market square where the brass bands line up and get ready to set off on their way through Durham, past the Royal County hotel and

on to the racecourse where the 'Big Meeting' takes place.

I was moved by the pride and seriousness of these colliery bands and the fantastic music that each played — no off notes and all different and distinctive.


The members of these marching bands are former miners and their wives and children from local schools. I heard of one case where a father became a player after his children became involved.

With the practising required — with rehearsals three times a week

and extensive touring — it's not particularly surprising that most of the children stop when they want to go out with their friends in their late teens. Some go back in later life.

The bands often represent collieries that have been closed some time and they struggle for funds for the instruments and uniforms, which aren't cheap. They play in supermarkets and other public areas and make collections.

Mike Cooke
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Sheffield college strike sell-out thwarted

THE LONG-RUNNING dispute between the lecturers' union NATFHE and Sheffield College took another dramatic turn this week when the union's further education industrial relations committee instructed local officials to break off an agreement made between local negotiators and the college directorate. The deal, they said, broke national policy and guidelines.

On Tuesday 5 July, Sheffield's co-ordinating committee secretary, Seb Smoller, failed to convince the national union's industrial relations committee that the deal was constitutional.

The nub of the issue was whether or not the agreed framework constituted a bona fide contractual agreement that recognised a guaranteed process of collective bargaining.

The agreed framework, which was zealously sold to the membership, was ratified in a ballot open for only five hours on the main sites by a majority of three to two among the 1,800 members.

The 'framework' represented a considerable deterioration in the conditions of service of the membership, including loss of holidays, potentially intolerable teaching loads and a surrendering of any professional autonomy to the new management elites.

Threat

It also represented a threat to the national struggle because of Sheffield College's strategic importance as the largest further education institution in the country.

Despite the potential for confusion in this situation where the local unpaid leadership and — it must be said — regional and national full-time officials had

been party to a deal which went against national policy, the Sheffield membership overwhelmingly refused to sign the new contracts and lodged them with their branch committees unsigned.

Inquiry

Resolutions from the branches called for an inquiry into the thwarted sell-out and called for a programme of action in September when the majority of teaching staff resume their duties after the summer break.

An inquiry is to be welcomed, of course, but the political lessons of this struggle lie much deeper.

Those local and regional officers who wished to accept the contracts were expressing their political conviction that nothing else could be gained and that the membership was not prepared for further action.

This was not a tactical assessment of the situation but flowed from the politics of 'post-modern Stalinism' and Labourite 'modernising realism'.

The issues raised by the Sheffield dispute are those faced by the working class and the trades unions as they move against the Tory onslaught.

BY PETER GIBSON

NURSES from London's Middlesex and University College hospitals camped in cardboard boxes outside the office of their chief executive, Charles Marshall, to protest at a 22 per cent increase in their rents.

Student nurses, who earn only £5,000 per year and who have not had an increase for over 12 months, have been told their rent will go up 16 per cent,

from £96 per month to £112.

Rents are calculated as a proportion of their pay, so a £12,000 per year staff nurse faces a rent increase of £32 per month. An ancillary worker on £9,000 faces the highest increase, from £172 per month to £211.

Penny Fletcher, aged 21 and a third-year nurse, said her accommodation is the size of small boxroom, with room only for a wardrobe, sink, bed and desk. After paying her rent, she ends up with just £323 per month

Durham applauds Workers Aid for Bosnia musicians

BY MIKE COOKE

ABOUT 40 Workers Aid for Bosnia supporters, including 20 Bosnian people, marched proudly through Durham with the miners' and other workers' movement banners and bands.

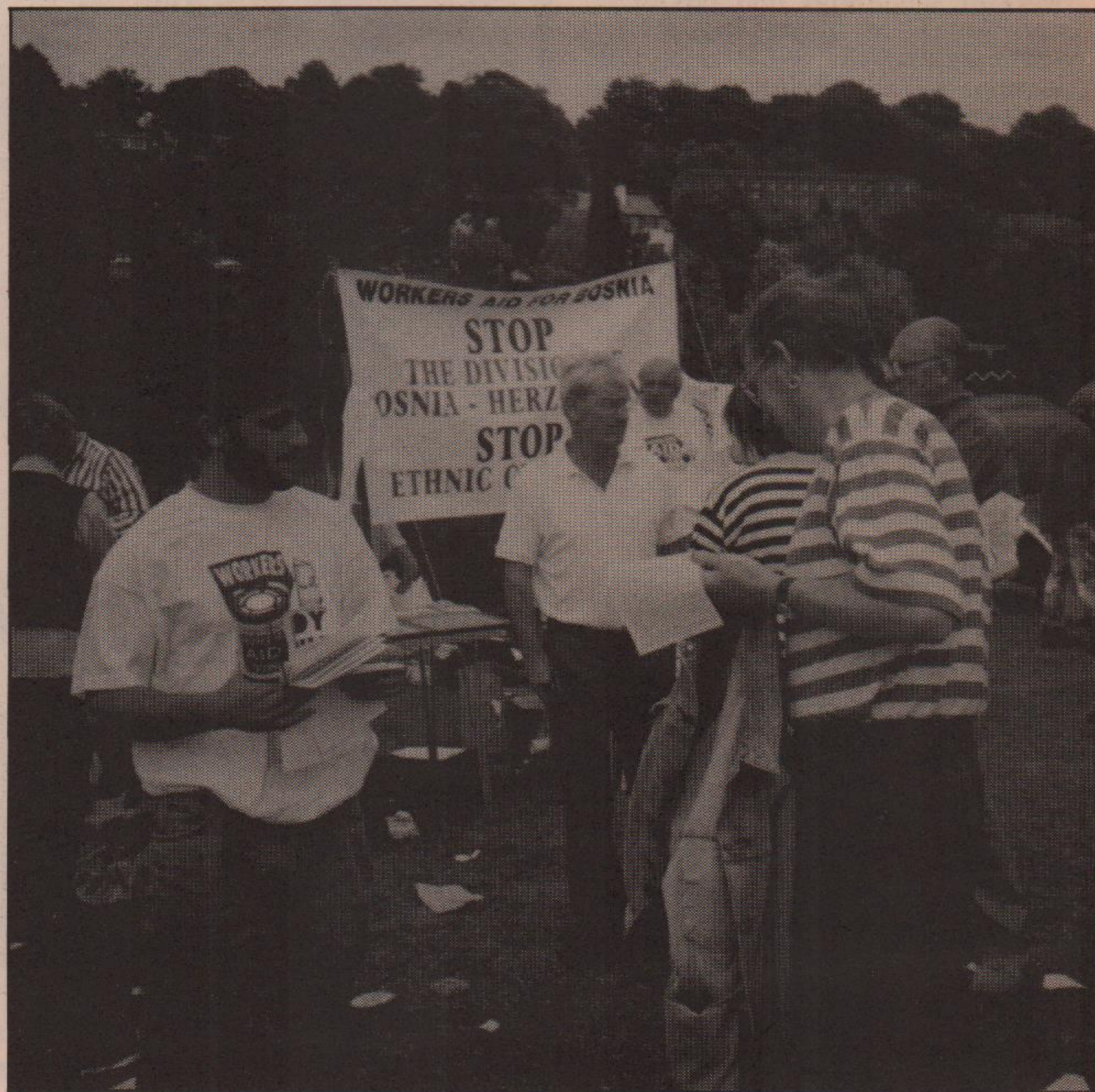
Led by its own banner and an accordion player and a guitarist, the contingent collected money along the way from the generous people of the area and about £700 was raised during the day.

The musicians played Bosnian and internationally popular songs and the contingent waited its turn to perform under the balcony of the Royal County hotel, where the guests of the North East area of the National Union of Mineworkers traditionally listen to the miners' bands.

The contingent then carried on to the Durham racecourse where the 'Big Meeting' takes place. There Workers Aid set up a stall and continued handing out leaflets and collecting money. The warm response to Workers Aid was a reflection of a deep desire in the working class to express its international nature.

Despite fears earlier in the year that this would be the last Durham gala, if it happened at all, it turned out to be the biggest for some years.

Speeches at the 'Big Meeting' were typified by former National Union of Public Employees leader Rodney Bickerstaffe who appealed for a return to the 'basics of socialism'. These speakers have talked of 'socialism' for many years but have done nothing to build the working-class movement that is necessary to achieve it.



Workers Aid for Bosnia stall at this year's Durham Miners Gala 'Big Meeting'

Cardboard city protest at nurses' rent rises

BY PETER GIBSON

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to pay for food, travel, clothes, and other necessities.

'If the hospital management was able to give us a good reason why they were putting up the rents we could understand it, but all we are told is that it is to make the hospital cost-effective,' said Penny, revealing the real issue.

Other nurses said that the position in some nurses' halls of residence is even worse. 'We have carpets and curtains at John Astor at the Middlesex,' said one nurse, 'but at Rockefeller at UCH it's just bare floorboards.'

On their pay the nurses say they cannot afford to live any-

where else — except cardboard boxes.

A spokesperson for the hospital trust which runs the two hospitals said it was not the intention to raise anyone's rent by more than 10 per cent. This makes even more angry those nursing staff whose wage 'increase' this year is 0 per cent.

This is yet another example of the need for those who work in the health service and those who need and use it to have control over how it is run.

It is clear that, in spite of the protests, the NHS is on the road to privatisation — so private industry can make a profit from the needs of the sick and infirm.

Hospital scandal in Croydon

MAYDAY University Hospital in Croydon, south London, is under investigation following the death from a brain tumour of a 49-year-old woman.

She had twice been sent to the hospital by her GP with a request for an immediate X-ray. She was sent home twice after being told there was nothing wrong with her.

Two weeks later she was sent to Mayday Hospital again by the local health centre. At 2.30 am she was admitted after a six and a half hour wait in the casualty department.

Although the people of Croydon raised tens of thousands of pounds to buy a scanner only two years ago, she was told there was no scanner!

After much protest by her doctor and family she was scanned two days later, and then transferred to the Atkinson Morley Hospital for an emergency operation to remove a brain tumour. She died a month later.

Another patient died of a heart-attack in the casualty department whilst waiting to see a doctor.

The local Labour MP, Malcolm Wicks, says he has had a number of complaints about the hospital.

What is clear is that hospitals need far fewer accountants and management consultants and more nurses and doctors. But then hospital trusts would not become profitable and ready for full privatisation.

No one left at the pier — a day in Brighton

BY JIM SMITH

WHEN one man asked me if he was at the comedy stage because he was meeting a friend there, I thought he wasn't far wrong.

We'd been treated to TUC general secretary John Monks, Labour shadow treasury spokesman Gordon Brown, and public service union UNISON general secretary Alan Jinkinson at the last Saturday's TUC public services day, in Brighton, called 'Left at the pier'.

Some wit, no doubt, had spent hours thinking that one up. Most people at Brighton were there for the day out and did not even know the great event was on.

But there was no signal worker or representative of their union, the RMT. No call was made to support the signal workers in their strike action.

At its peak, no more than 200 were gathered around the platform. Monks seemed lost with-

out his friends Tory employment secretary David Hunt and CBI chief Howard Davies. Brown asserted Labour's commitment to a minimum wage when challenged by general union GMB vice-president Mary Turner, who is also a school canteen worker in Brent.

Brown also maintained Labour would restore union rights to workers at the GCHQ electronic spying centre. But there were no further pledges on union rights forthcoming from him.

Brown was obviously considered to be the 'star', because when Jinkinson got up to speak the audience was reduced to 50.

When I tried to sell the 'Unite' paper of the Community and Union Action Campaign, one drunken spectator wrongly associated me with the TUC organisers of the rally. He refused to buy a copy because 'you lot have ruined my fucking day already'.

■ 'Unite', 40p, available from CUAC, c/o Lambeth TURC, 12-14 Thornton Street, London SW9.

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Inside left

Heritage for the future

THE North-East coalfields of Durham, with its castle, cathedral, and university. And in the centre of Durham is an equestrian statue of the third marquess of Londonderry, whose family for many years owned much of the area thereabouts, and most of the land beneath it.

It is 150 years since the miners of Northumberland and Durham petitioned parliament about safety, working conditions and payment. They fought a bitter five-month struggle against the coalowners. Concessions were held among workers and the country, but the union could not sustain people for long. Miners' families suffered hunger, and struggled on.

In July 1844, remembering they had evicted the miners' cottages too, the coalowners evicted 40,000 people. 'The feeble, old men and little children, even women in childbirth, were mercilessly turned from their homes, and cast into the roadside ditches. One agent dragged by the neck from her bed, and into the street, a woman in the pangs of childbirth.

Soldiers and police in crowds were present, ready to fire at the slightest symptom of resistance, on the faintest hint of the Justices of the Peace, who had brought about the 'brutal procedure' (from Friedrich Engels, 'The Condition of the Working Class in England').

Neither cowed nor provoked, the mining communities carried on. Some slept in ditches, others camped on private land and were prosecuted, fined a pound they could not pay, and sent to the treadmill. For weeks families remained out, with little, improvised shelter, and no food. Lord Londonderry threatened the small shopkeepers in his town of Seaham with his displeasure if they gave credit to the disloyal workfolk.

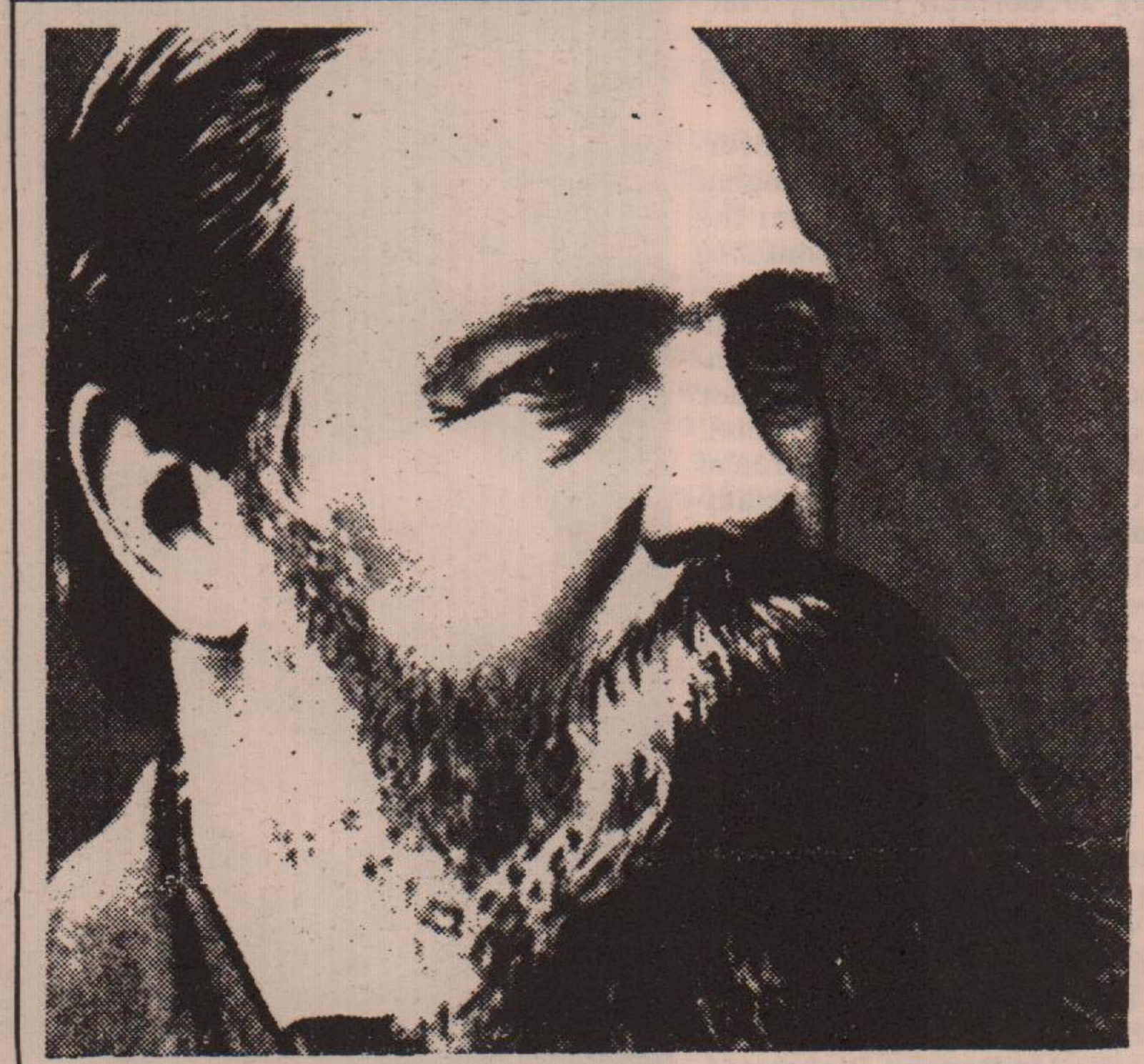
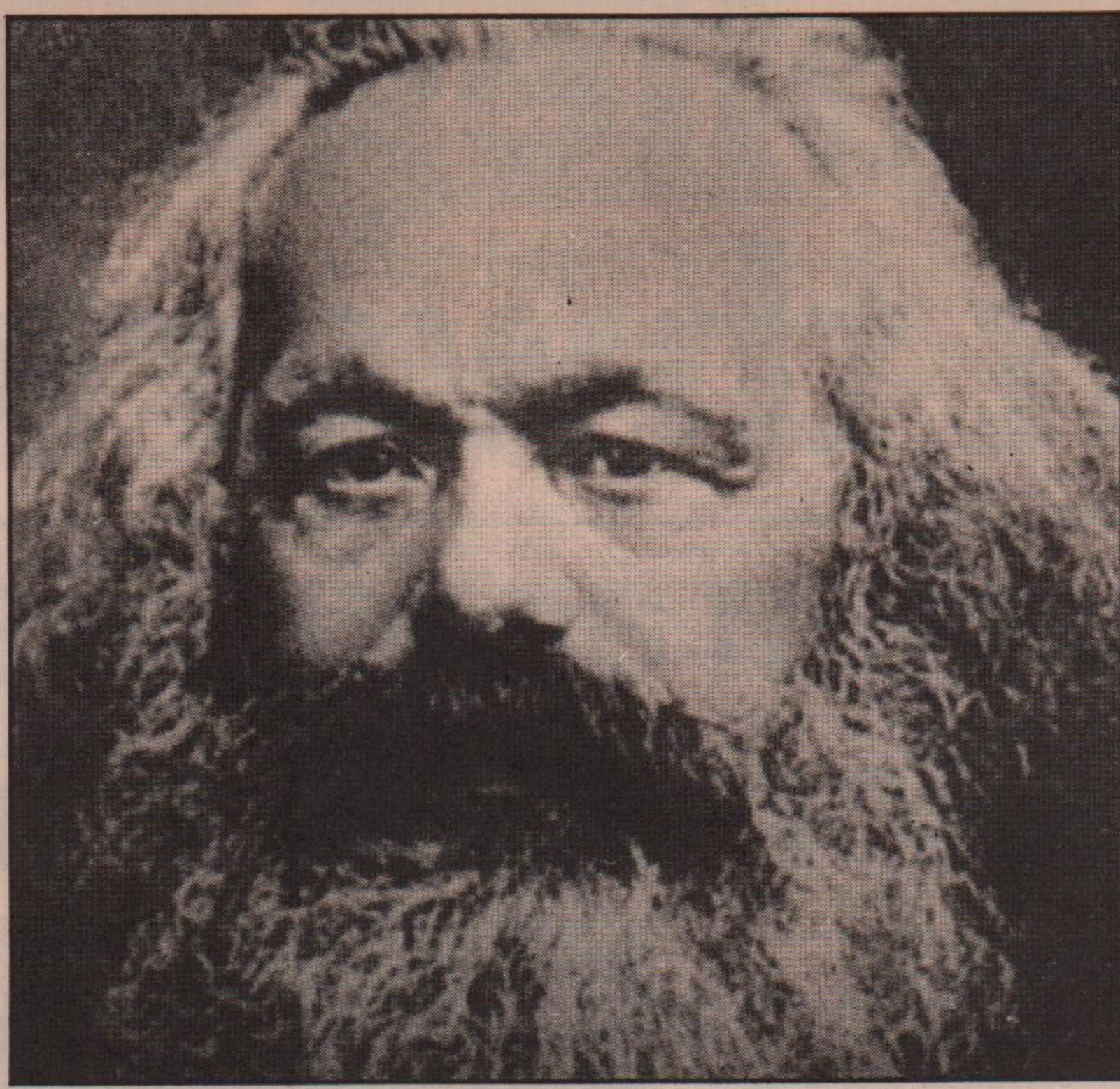
When this too failed, he drafted some of his famine-starved Irish tenants to replace the miners, and break the union. The miners were beaten — for the time being. But they would fight again.

We've heard a lot in recent years about 'our heritage', meaning the piles of our ancestors built for 'heroes' like the marquess of Londonderry. Last weekend, I played a bit of our real heritage, Durham's 'Big Meeting', when the miners, their families, and friends gathered over the town for their gala. Many thought it wouldn't take place this year, or said it would definitely be the last. The miners were supposed to be defeated. Most of the pits have closed. I was told it is the biggest turnout in years, and it looks like continuing. Watching the youngsters dancing down the street beside the Murton colliery band should inspire anyone with a joy and confidence in the future.

Miners' retreat

SRBIAN refugees received a warm welcome at the gala. When the Workers Aid for Bosnia, helped by the miners, started to set up its office, three gentlemen from the so-called International Communist Party (ICP) had to pack up and leave. They went quietly. It's just as well, since they were carrying a pamphlet slandering the Workers Aid as 'gun-runners' for imperialism. In Leeds an ICP member was asked if her party had evidence for their allegations. 'No, she affirmed confidently. 'What is it?' 'I don't know,' she admitted.

Charlie Pottins



Karl Marx (top) and Frederick Engels: founders of the Marxist world outlook that put bourgeois achievements in real unity

Call for an International THE FUTURE London

AS THE 20th century nears its end, the ruling class more and more turns away from reason and science as the basis for its outlook and ideology.

No longer believing in the humanising and liberatory role of education and science, or in the idea of a society founded on reason, the ruling class is increasingly driven to repudiate the cultural and ideological conquests of the past.

In the name of the rejection of all ideology, the bourgeoisie gives up any pretence of trying to grasp the laws of development of modern society as a whole. It even celebrates the 'end of history' as the end of a single, coherent process.

Instead of trying to grasp 'the historical process as a whole', bourgeois thought — in philosophy, sociology and other branches of the 'social sciences' — focuses increasingly on the supposed problems of the individual, sundered from his or her living social connections.

The progress of the natural sciences is increasingly threatened by the fact that their development is ever more subordinated to the needs of capital and its production for profit rather than production to satisfy human needs. At the same time, the absence of any coherent world outlook on the part of the ruling class also serves to impede the development of the natural sciences.

Indeed, throughout the present century we have seen the periodic and garish revival of mysticism, as astrology remains popular, religious cults mushroom, and seances and witchcraft are fashionable pastimes — obsessions even — in 'educated' circles, as well as providing research materials for the 'social sciences'.

And yet the growth of scientific thinking that marked the rise of the bourgeoisie in the modern world was a great human achievement. This achievement found its highest expression in the sphere of social thought, with the conviction that science could provide the basis for the control of society in the interests of human beings.

The Marxist world outlook took the principal achievements of bourgeois thought — English classical political economy (Smith, Ricardo), French theories of socialism, and classical German philosophy — and overcame the contradictions within them.

Marx and Engels did this by placing these achievements in their real context or unity, from which unity came the force which alone could really overcome these contradictions — the working class.

The task of the working class in emancipating itself from capitalism was to lay the basis for a truly human, classless society which would carry forward the entire cul-

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Russia — a capitalism of bandits and mobsters

Hardly a day passes without further news of the growing power of organised crime in eastern Europe and the former USSR. Last week's Workers Press reported on an article in the 'Observer' (3 July) that revealed networks of former east German Stasi secret police linking up with the Russian mafia to supply stolen luxury cars and launder drugs money through new business ventures. NICK LEE shows how deeply the mafia has penetrated Russian society

THE POWER of the Russian mafia is now acknowledged to be as great — if not greater — than that of the state apparatus itself. It is no longer seen as parasitic on the newly emerging Russian bourgeoisie, it is the bourgeoisie. Hence the Russians have coined the word 'biznez' — a direct borrowing of the English word 'business' — to signify organised crime. A Western businessman in Moscow was recently quoted (the 'Guardian', 27 May) as saying: 'It is the mafia that makes business possible.'

The power of the Russian mafia was consolidated in two stages. First, following the collapse of the Stalinist regime an alliance emerged between traditional organised crime — racketeers, drug smugglers, etc. — and sections of the corrupt state bureaucracy itself.

The racketeers acted as pipelines for the channelling of the profits of corruption under the old regime as well as the profits from the growing trade in hard drugs. Aided by Western crime groups the

Russian mafia engaged in money laundering and illegal currency export. Bureaucrats, seeing the writing on the wall and wanting their wealth safe in a Swiss bank account or invested in luxury property abroad turned to the mafia.

Then, in 1992, came the second stage — privatisation. The overriding aim of the Yeltsin regime was to transfer Russian state enterprises as rapidly as possible to private investors, so as to create a politically irreversible shift to capitalism. Since few Western investors would risk buying near-bankrupt enterprises, the privatisation process became something of a parody of the Thatcherite selling off of British Gas and BT.

Russians were given vouchers, corresponding to their share of the 'people's wealth', that could be traded as shares and exchanged for actual shares in state enterprises.

The buying and selling of these vouchers created a field day for both the mafia and the bureaucracy. At public auctions of state property, investors were threatened by

gangsters who wanted to buy up the property cheaply. Citizens were persuaded to sell their vouchers to 'investment funds' that promptly vanished.

In November last year traffic in central Moscow was blocked by angry investors demanding compensation for their losses from the Technical Progress voucher fund, which had vanished, together with its directors.

In other cases leading officials spirited away thousands of shares, so that the old bureaucratic managers became the majority shareholders in the newly 'privatised' enterprises.

The result has been massive gains by organised crime — and their friends in the bureaucracy — in the control of the new private sector. In Moscow alone it is estimated that between 50 and 80 per cent of all new commercial enterprises, including nearly all hotels and shops, are under the control of criminal groups.

Moscow police estimate that 40 out of 260 private banks are in the hands of the mafia — one explanation of the relatively low rate of bank robberies in a city where law and order has virtually collapsed.

What the mafia doesn't control outright it forces into submission through protection rackets backed up by an army of contract killers. The Russian murder rate has risen 40 per cent over the last four years.

At 19.9 deaths per 100,000 of the population, it is double the American rate, which previously had been the highest in the industrialised world.

Western commentators are reacting in a number of ways to these developments.

Security agencies stress the collapse of any effective police and legal control, making the former USSR a haven for the world's mafias. Luciano Violante, chair of the Italian parliamentary anti-mafia commission, claimed last October that Russia is becoming 'a kind of strategic capital of organised crime from where all the major operations are launched'.

He claimed that the Russian and Italian mafias had held two or three 'summits' since 1991 to 'discuss money laundering, the drugs trade and selling nuclear material'.

Concern

There is also concern about the increased operation of Russian and former USSR criminals in western Europe and the US. The shooting of Karen Reid in Surrey last April by skilled contract killers was seen as mafia revenge for the alleged involvement of her Armenian brother-in-law in the murder of two officials of the Russian republic of Chechnya in London last year. The American FBI is so worried that at

nal Conference:

UTURE OF MARXISM

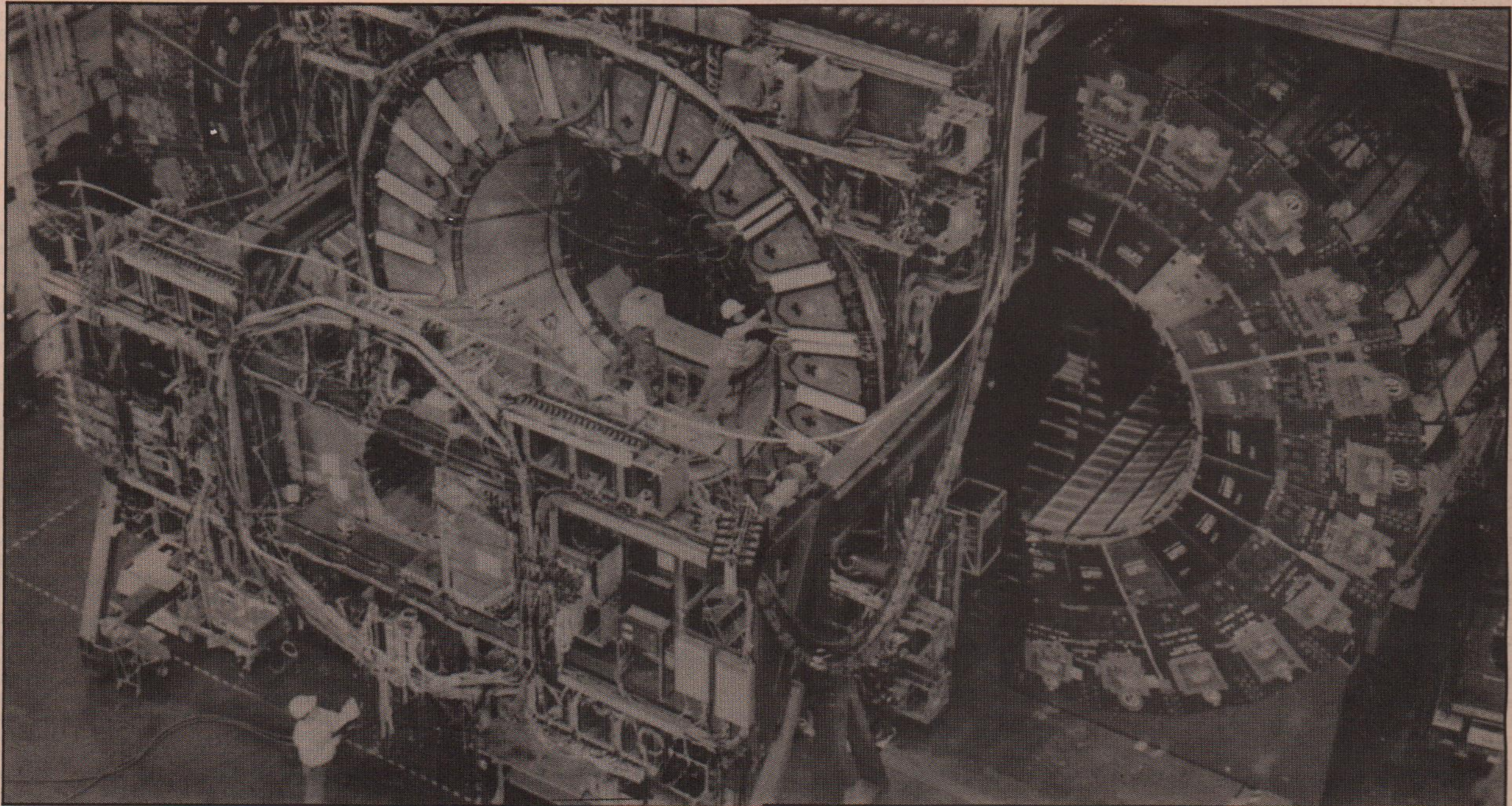
, 20-22 January 1995

achievements of the past. It is why, in calling this international conference in defence of achievements of reason and science, we do so from the standpoint that in the last resort they can be defended only through the defence of Marxism.

In the past many of the best intellectuals, who wanted genuinely to investigate present-day society's crises, were turned away from Marxism because, in their eyes, it was equated with its grotesque perversion: Stalinism. The Stalinist regimes in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have collapsed, along with the ideology of the Stalinist bureaucracy that for decades was able to pass itself off as Marxism. We therefore see this conference as a forum for discussing the various aspects of the social and political crisis engulfing society, thus providing an opportunity to continue the renewal and defence of Marxism.

We invite papers for consideration for the conference. The deadline for receipt of papers is 1 December 1994. We hope to publish the conference proceedings and in turn use the conference as the basis for the launch of a new journal to carry out its work.

For further details, please write to: Jill Pilling, Conference Organiser, Box 735, London SW8 1YB.



The absence of any coherent world outlook on the part of the ruling class also serves to impede the development of the natural sciences

At the end of May it opened a Moscow office to 'help the Russian police combat the mafia'.

The police focus tends to see Russian organised crime as simply a product of the chaos and 'vacuum' created by the collapse of 'communism' and a rapid transition to capitalism. The assumption is that once a well-equipped and well-trained police apparatus is in place then the fight back against the mafia can gain the upper hand.

More thoughtful bourgeois commentators are confronted by a deeper question. If the collapse of 'communism' leads not to a transition to capitalism but to chaos, what does this say for the idea of the capitalist system as the natural and inevitable destination at which all modern societies must arrive sooner or later?

One way round this conundrum is to see the mafia as playing a historically progressive role, taking Russia rapidly through a stage akin to the primitive accumulation of capital en route to modern capitalism.

Thus John Anderson, a US authority on banking and finance believes that the mafia, by reinvesting its money in Russia itself, assists the development of modern capitalism.

'They (the Russian mafiosi) are robber barons like the Rockefellers and the Morgans. Today's mafiosi are tomorrow's banker and industrialist' ('Guardian', 27 May).

But this is definitely a minority view that cuts little ice even with other right-wing commentators.

Claire Sterling, in her recently published book 'Crime Without Frontiers', documents how firms under mafia control 'contributed nothing, produced nothing, risked nothing, created no wealth save for the country's 100,000 new millionaires, who simply robbed what was there'.

One can only agree. But this is not a moral question, it is rather a reflection of the fact that in a deepening crisis of world imperialism the conditions for a healthy young capitalism to grow up in the former USSR are entirely absent.

The main aim of organised crime is the export of capital and speculation on the international money markets. In 1993 transfers of currency out of Russia, legal and illegal, are believed to have been \$12 to \$15 billion. This is far greater than all foreign aid and investment.

The mafiosi running large sections of the banking system are interested in anything but 'laying the foundations for tomorrow's capitalism'.

Bribed

The Western press recently carried the tale of some 'honest' Russian capitalists who had tried to wire some money from Chelyabinsk to Moscow. The money took nine months to arrive and the bank had to be bribed to cough up. The account had been spirited away for use in currency speculation (the 'Guardian', 10 May).

The result is that the small bourgeoisie remain small. They are forced into business using only ready cash and trading in rapid turnover goods, such as imported Western luxury items for the consumption of Russia's new rich, a consumption hardly likely to boost the home market for new capitalist enterprise.

While privatisation was the main priority, the Yeltsin regime, despite its occasional rhetoric, did nothing to stop the mafia.

With the Russian economy on the verge of collapse, Yeltsin issued, on 14 June, a decree entitled 'Urgent Measures to Defend the Population from Banditry and other Manifestations of Organised

Crime'. This enables the authorities to detain suspected members of criminal organisations for up to 30 days without a judicial hearing. This violates the Russian constitution, which specifies a maximum of 48 hours.

The investigators are also empowered to examine the financial affairs and property of suspected members of criminal organisations, of their relatives, and of people who have lived with them in the past five years. They can also get access to confidential commercial and banking information on individuals or companies suspected of illegal activity.

These measures, reminiscent of the Stalinist period, quite apart from the general threat to civil liberties, will do little to combat organised crime because there is no efficient police apparatus to carry them out.

While the mafia can offer bribes many times the salary of ordinary police officers and has better weapons and faster cars, the only effect of such measures will be to further concentrate the power of the crime bosses by enabling corrupt state investigators to force legitimate firms to reveal business secrets to their mafia competitors!

The defeat of organised crime in Russia can only be conducted by the working class and its allies. The working class has no interest in pillaging the national wealth and exporting it to Western bank accounts or squandering it in imported luxuries, nor in the pollution of its youth through the dissemination of heroin and cocaine addiction.

The working class in Russia and throughout the former USSR desperately needs a leadership prepared to fight for its independence as a social force against both the crime bosses and Yeltsin's bureaucracy.



The collapse of Stalinism has led to chaos, not capitalism

On with the dance!

THAT supremely cheerful picture on page 5 of last week's Workers Press, showing people holding hands and dancing in a ring at a Durham miners' 'Big Meeting' in the 1970s, gave me great pleasure.

But there were some readers who didn't approve of it at all. They thought it a flagrant waste of space.

The ring dance may be as old as humanity. It is depicted on ancient Greek vases, and present-day visitors to Perpignan or Barcelona have a reasonably good chance of seeing it in the shape of the *sardana*, the national dance of Catalonia.

It exists in Portugal and Brazil as the *ciranda*; in Brazil this dance was long supposed to have survived only among children, but I'm assured that in rural areas in the states of Goiás, Minas Gerais, and Sao Paulo it is still danced by adults too. I hope that, in whatever shape or form, the ring dance is still alive in Durham.

Now, can we expect sternly worded protest letters to Workers Press from those readers for whom the 30 column inches or so which that photograph occupied were scandalously wasted and ought to have been devoted to politics?

Probably not. Those who hold the view that music and dancing have nothing whatever to do with politics, and that writing and pictures on such topics are out of place in Workers Press, are strangely reluctant to put that view on paper and have it argued out in discussion.

Which is a great pity, for if such a discussion took place all of us could learn something, and some of us might learn a great deal.

I write with some feeling, for there were sharp but unwritten criticisms when I devoted a mere six column inches to Brazilian music and dance in the series of three columns I wrote recently on Brazil (in one of which, incidentally, published on 4 June, I made two spelling mistakes: '*trio-electrico*' should have been '*trio-elétrico*' and '*Olodun*' should have been '*Olodum*').

THERE are many arguments for music and dance having a place in a workers' paper. For the time being I limit myself to two, the first historical, the second pragmatic.

A serious attempt, masterminded by the Tory government, is being made to teach the history of music in a way that is overtly Eurocentric and covertly racist.

This leads to the suppression of uncomfortable facts about major influences from other continents and other cultures on the music of Europe ever since peoples from north Africa conquered and civilised the Iberian peninsula in the ninth century.

A recent example of such suppression comes from Radio 3. In the second half of the 18th century a type of song known as the *modinha* was extremely popular in Portugal and Brazil.

The *modinha* in fact originated in Brazil. It was taken to Portugal in 1770 by the gifted Brazilian poet, priest and musician Domingos Caldas Barbosa (1738-1800), whose mother was an African, born in Angola. Barbosa's songs took Lisbon by storm, and for years the Brazilian *modinha* was all the rage there.

The other evening Radio 3 broadcast a rare recital of *modinhas* from the Portuguese embassy in London. The announcer quoted the English traveller William Beckford ('I am a slave to *modinhas* . . . the most bewitching melodies that ever existed since the days of the Sybarites') without a word to indicate that it was the Brazilian original, not the rather

PERSONAL COLUMN

pallid Portuguese imitation, that Beckford had in mind.

Only in passing, and only after they were sung, did she say that the first two songs listeners heard were both by Brazilian composers.

And she claimed that 18th-century 'Italian incomers' to Portugal had been largely responsible for this type of song — whereas in fact the influence of Italian operatic arias on the Portuguese *modinha* didn't become apparent until well into the 19th century.

Are these details important? Yes, very. Radio 3 isn't the only place where any sort of nonsense is repeated in order to show that the 'classical' European musical tradition is self-contained — sealed off from and superior to any other sort of music from anywhere else in the world — and in order to avoid acknowledging the Arab and African contributions.

Exposing the Eurocentric rubbish that stands in the way of a truthful history of world music is part of the struggle against racism. It is a political task, and an important one.

Now the pragmatic argument. Workers Press wrote editorially on 7 May that a large number of young protesters 'are repelled by the labour movement as it is presently led and organised'.

Do revolutionary socialists suppose that this doesn't also apply to them? If so, they inhabit a fool's paradise.

The real world is full of young people who love to listen to music and to make it, who love to dance, who have a lively interest in those activities. If our paper is to win them as readers, it has got to take their enthusiasms into account.

I hope I've provoked the neopuritans to defend their stance. If not, let them heed Sir Toby Belch: 'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?'

A mistake, and a mystery

MANY thanks to the sharp-eyed reader who pointed out that I was wrong to call the French socialist leader Jules Guesde a son-in-law of Karl Marx (25 June).

Marx had three daughters who survived infancy. The eldest, Jenny (1844-1883), married the French socialist leader Charles Longuet (1839-1903) in 1872.

The second daughter, Laura (1845-1911), married the French socialist leader Paul Lafargue (1842-1911) in 1868. The youngest daughter, Eleanor (1855-1898), married the British socialist leader Edward Aveling (1851-1898) in 1884.

Now, Jules Guesde (1845-1922), whose real name was Mathieu Jules Bazile, does appear to have married into the Marx family, for Eleanor wrote to Laura on 25 September 1891 that he was 'my cousin-in-law, now, I suppose' ('The Daughters of Karl Marx: Family Correspondence 1866-1898', trans. Faith Evans, Deutsch, 1982, p.233).

But I haven't yet found out which of her cousins he married. French encyclopedias are all silent on the matter, though they do summarise Guesde's political career; and even the otherwise omniscient Marx Memorial Library has been unable to throw any light.

Perhaps one of our French readers will be able to solve this small mystery?

Peter Fryer

Television

Nothing new under the moon

Review by Jeff Jackson

THE four programmes shown on BBC2 recently, marking the anniversary of the first setting foot on the moon's surface 25 years ago, inevitably trod some familiar ground.

The two-part 'One Small Step — Man on the Moon' (28-29 June) began by recounting fairly lightly the early days of the so-called space race. Film clips showing President John F. Kennedy informing the world-at-large about his country's great new scientific undertaking was, it was pointed out, so much window-dressing. The Soviet Union had already put men (and later a woman) into orbit while NASA was still debating whether to launch a potato!

Over the next six or seven years the paranoia created by this latest threat from 'Communist' domination ensured that, in the US at least, space-travel-related enterprises formed a major growth industry. For example, swamp-land around Cape Canaveral, Florida, became a vast industrial complex.

Colossal

'They worked hard and played hard,' offered one commentator euphemistically. Well in advance of any official announcement, local druggists were able to tell, from their increased sales of tranquillisers, when the next launch would be.

The US government went to colossal lengths, both in terms of financial investment and risk to human life, in order to be the first nation to get an astronaut on the moon.

This was put into sharp perspective when, on the day of the historic launch of Apollo 11, a civil rights demonstration headed by a symbolic mule-train, confronted NASA officials to protest that, for a fraction of

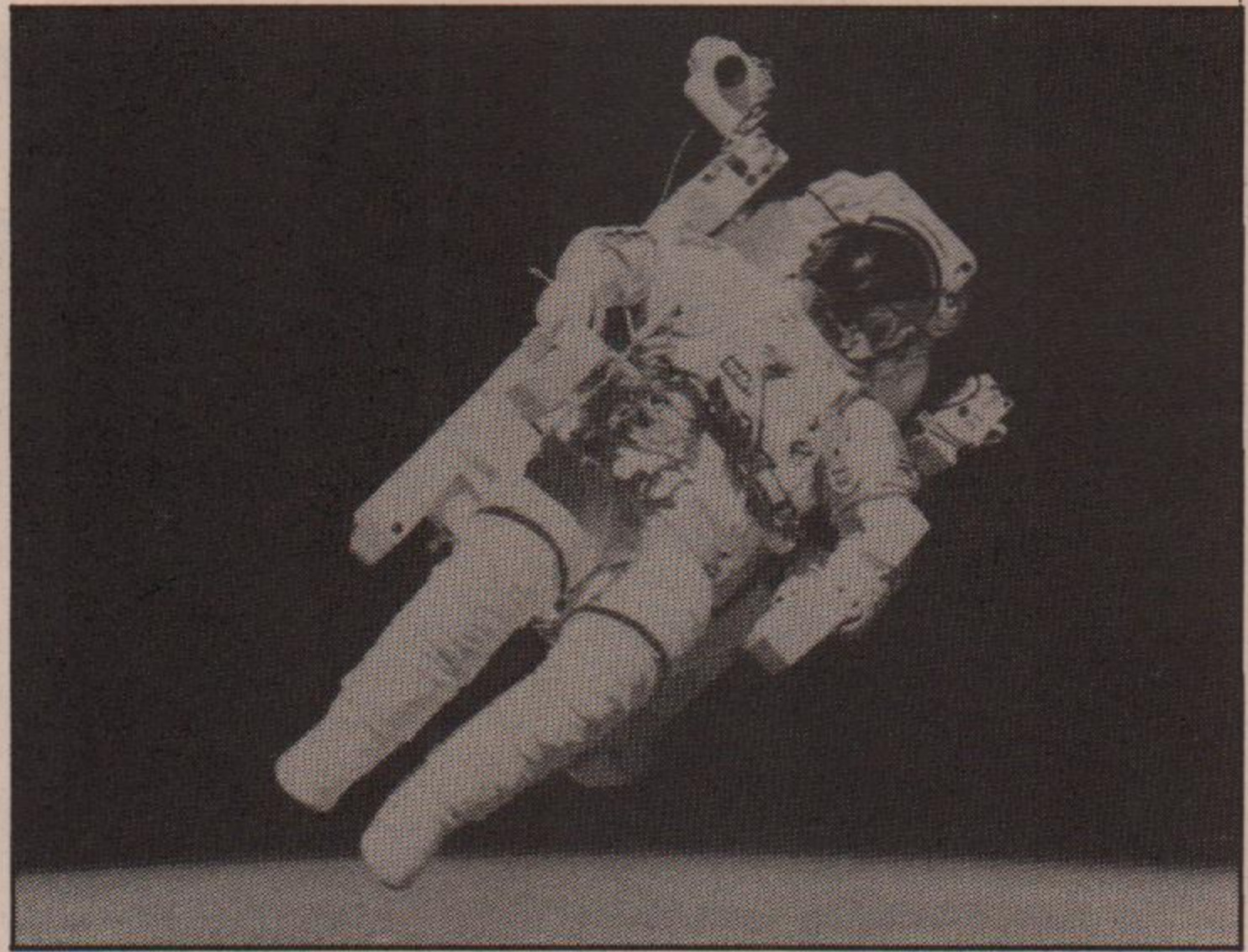
the billions of dollars US imperialism was spending on its vast space programme, that country's poor could be fed.

It was difficult not to agree with the last contributor to the programme, who summed up this spectacular achievement by likening the role the US played to that of a dog lifting its leg against a lamp-post, marking it territorially, and walking away. Spanish director Pedro

fail to outrage the establishment, they have enjoyed great commercial success.

They are very often hugely comic extravaganzas hurtling their way into hitherto taboo territory and peopled with the most weird and wonderful characters.

Central to 'Kika' is the extended rape sequence which is presented in typically hilarious fashion. This treatment has dis-



Human capital? The US government's investment in the space programme and the moon walk was huge

Almodovar, whose latest film, 'Kika', has received a somewhat mixed critical reception, was the subject of THE LATE SHOW: 'The Indiscreet Charm of Pedro Almodovar' (BBC2, 30 June).

Almodovar's relatively short career has been very much associated with the freedom of expression which Spain rediscovered following the death of Franco. While his films never

turbed even former admirers of Almodovar's work. But he uses the episode to make a serious social comment: the crime is video-recorded by a Peeping Tom and is later screened by a ruthless commercial television channel, causing the victim still greater humiliation.

While some critics seem to be asking if the fresh and original talent Almodovar displayed throughout the 1980s has run its

course, others are pointing to a darker side of his emerging coincident with Spain's economic crisis, record unemployment figures, and disillusion with a 12-year-old 'Socialist' government.

THE LATE SHOW: 'Rudolph Cartier — A Television Pioneer' (BBC2, 1 July) paid tribute to a seminal figure of TV's 'golden age', who died last month.

Born in Vienna in 1904, Cartier arrived in England in the late 1930s. His career in British television began in 1952. He came from a cinema background which included working with such people as Billy Wilder.

Emotions

He didn't like what he saw in British television and immediately set about changing it. He regarded TV as 'a subject for emotions, for thought'.

He introduced a cultural excellence to the small screen never witnessed before. Adaptations of works by Tolstoy, Brecht, Dostoevsky and many more. But Cartier will probably be best remembered for the science-fiction serial 'The Quatermass Experiment'. It was thought to be so disturbing that each episode was preceded with a warning to those of a nervous disposition.

Nigel Kneale, who wrote the script, also adapted Cartier's '1984' from Orwell's novel. This 1954 production caused an even bigger furore than did 'Quatermass'. The BBC felt obliged to provide him with two bodyguards, accused as he was with promoting pro-communist, anti-fascist ideas. And questions were asked in parliament. 'The BBC needed me like a desert needs water,' he once told an interviewer.

Lords react to groundswell concern over driver hours, safety

BY ROY THOMAS

YOU MIGHT think that some members in the House of Lords had been reading Workers Press reports of government and employers' proposals to relax the control of the hours lorry, van and bus drivers can drive without a break or a day off.

A combination of Labour and Liberal Lords amended a government deregulation bill to ensure that any employer who flouted the control of drivers' hours would not get their operating licence renewed.

The Lords also imposed a control on the licencing where a company would impose an 'adverse effect' on the local environment. A Labour peer said the bill did not do enough to protect coach and bus passengers from the dangers of driver fatigue.

In the latest issue of the 'Record', monthly journal of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), Martin Mayer, a member of the TGWU Executive, is quoted as saying:

'Drivers are picking up that the public are increasingly concerned over safety because of highly-publicised accidents.'

Tightening

'Parents are especially concerned about school trips, and there is a groundswell of support for tightening up regulations.'

Mayer went on to say: 'In practice drivers are breaking regulations regularly for fear of losing their jobs.' Low hour-

ly rates of pay mean the necessity to work longer hours to earn a living.

Graham Stevenson, TGWU national passenger services secretary, gave the example of a Yorkshire coach company which revealed 79 per cent of drivers suffered from exhaustion. Yet deregulation and increasing competitive pressure on companies has led to costs being cut and safety measures being eroded.

The government's reaction to employers breaking health and safety rules and regulations has been to do away with those regulations.

Profit

Clearly for the government and the employers profit is far more important than passengers' or drivers' lives. Competition is more important than safety.

Now even some members of the House of Lords are concerned at the level of the media exposure of the dangers of driver fatigue and the likely popular reaction to these dangers.

The task of every activist in the trade union and labour movement is to expose at each and every opportunity the dangers and the employment practices which cause them.

For example, in Scotland, three bus drivers wrote letters of complaint about the maintenance of the buses they drove for 'Clydeside 2000'. Spot checks were carried out by the Department of Transport vehicle examiners. Of the

39 buses examined, seven were subject to immediate prohibitions, nine to delayed prohibitions.

At a Scottish traffic commission hearing recently it was reported that since the company was granted a licence in September 1991, vehicle examiners from the Department of Transport had issued 46 immediate and 27 delayed prohibitions on its buses.

In one case a bus driver took his bus to a police station claiming the company had not done anything about a defective exhaust. The police themselves put an immediate prohibition notice on the bus.

Most revealing of all is that 'Clydeside 2000' has 680 employees, most of whom are shareholders in the company.

They may have shares, but they clearly do not have control!

US socialist collects for Workers Aid for Bosnia

EIGHTY-year-old US socialist Herb Lewin collected \$330 (£510) for the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign on 25 June, at a celebration in Philadelphia of his life and activism. During a period of 60 years Herb has been active in the labour, environmental, civil and human rights, and socialist movements. He will be 80 on 22 July.

Before the celebration Herb said that those wishing to bring gifts should instead bring donations 'to aid the families of the multi-ethnic miners and other workers of Tuzla, Bosnia'.

1994 Pentonville 5 Commemoration TGWU Gold Badge Award to Vic Turner

Presentation, Friday 29 July
7pm, Dockers Club, Boulcott St,
London E1

Vic Turner was a prominent leader during the 1972 dockworkers' strike who was imprisoned by the Heath government for his activism.

The truth about German resistance to the Nazis

Using hitherto unpublished archive material he has discovered, the historian JAMES D. YOUNG defends the honour of the German anti-fascist socialists who risked torture and death to join in the unsuccessful plot to kill Hitler 50 years ago this month

SOCIALIST anti-fascists in post-war Germany left important evidence in a hitherto neglected archive that, among other things, documents their role in the plot to kill Hitler on 20 July 1944.

The archive records the work and correspondence of the American socialists' International Solidarity Committee (ISC).

The influential right-wing German historian Joachim C. Fest asserted in his monumental biography of Hitler that in 1944 the German left 'was still suffering from the effects of the persecution, but . . . with characteristic ideological rigidity, feared any alliance with army officers as a "pact with the devil"'.

And he went on to argue in his still best-selling paperback biography of Hitler that 'Among the many participants in the opposition there was, significantly, not a single representative of the Weimar Republic; that republic did not survive even in the Resistance.'

But the precious historical evidence in the ISC archive contradicts both of Fest's dogmatic right-wing assertions.

Liberation

During the years immediately after the liberation of Europe, Paul Loebe, for many years president of the Reichstag under the Weimar republic, was still agitating for democratic socialism. So was the former labour minister, Dr Rudolf Wissell.

Moreover in 1949 William Sollman, a socialist living and active in Germany, asked the ISC to send food parcels to the 72-year-old Lore Agnes:

'L.A. has been one of the most outstanding women in the German Social Democratic movement, a friend of Clara Zetkin in the earlier days, of Hugo Haase and Kautsky too.

'She is one of the founders of the Unabhaengige Sozialdemokratische Partei [Independent Social-Democratic Party], had been in prison during the First World War and was a member first of the National-Versammlung [National Assembly] and then of the Reichstag until 1933.

'In the Hitler days people looked upon her with confi-

dence. She lost her husband, several children and her home. She is still very active; working for the movement is the essence of her life.

'She has never asked anything for herself, although she is living on an old-age benefit of 32 Marks a month!'

Clearly Hitler's fascism was sometimes forced to tolerate the unrepentant democratic socialists in its midst as well as actual representatives of the hated Weimar republic.

Moreover other anti-fascist socialists in post-1945 Germany left valuable evidence in the archive to document their role. In 1949 Jane Corey wrote to Phil Heller, the ISC's full-time executive director in New York, to request food parcels for Frau Rosemarie Reichwein in Berlin.

Plot

Corey pointed out that 'Mrs Reichwein is the widow of Professor Reichwein, former member of the Social Democratic Party, who was one of the main participants in the plot against Hitler from 20 July 1944. Together with comrade Leber, he immediately was arrested and hanged without a trial.'

One of the German socialists involved in the 20 July plot, Franz Josef Furtwaengler, not only survived to tell his own story, he became the first post-war director of the reconstructed SDP's Labour Academy in Frankfurt in 1947.

In a letter he sent to the ISC, he wrote: 'At the outbreak of the war I joined the labour wing of that underground movement which finally led to the July action in 1944. After that revolt I escaped and was sheltered in the Black Forest.'

In occasional articles in the American and British labour and socialist press between 1933 and 1945, the German socialists' resistance to Hitlerism was portrayed with pride and eloquence.

But the Anglo-American world as a whole did not know very much about the extent of either Nazi terrorism or the concentration camps, particularly during the years immediately after Hitler came to power in 1933.

In 1946 the American journalist Gabriel A. Almond



As fascism again rises, the democratic left must defend the honour of the German socialist anti-fascists who fought Hitler

published in New York his pamphlet 'How Many Anti-Nazi Germans?' In that neglected pamphlet he wrote:

'Gestapo records report the distribution of some 20 separate leaflets emanating mainly from left-wing groups in the Dusseldorf Gestapo region from June 1940 until June 1943. There is similar evidence that leaflets were distributed at Leipzig, Hamburg, Halle and many other areas.'

He added: 'The Gestapo found this in a telephone booth in Essen in June 1943: "In a short time we shall hang 200,000 Nazis on 200,000 gallows. Comrades, prepare yourselves for the hour of freedom. Social Democratic Party of Germany."'

In his editorial on 'Totalitarianism and Democracy' in the May 1945 issue of the 'Plebs' magazine, J.P.M. Millar pointed out that from 1933 until 1939, 'vast numbers of Germans were flogged, tortured and murdered

in Nazi concentration camps, but it was extremely difficult to find any publicity given in the British press to these savage cruelties.

'Those who were not readers of newspapers like the "Daily Herald" or the "Manchester Guardian" were deliberately kept in almost complete ignorance of what was going on in Nazi Germany.'

A large and ever-growing number of what Goebbels called the 'anti-social' elements in the camps in 1933-34 were socialists, anarchists and communists, though some of them were also Jewish.

Survivors

Indeed, in a letter in the ISC archive, Jeanette Wolfe, one of the anti-fascist socialist survivors of the holocaust, declared: 'On 12 March 1933 I was the first woman in Germany to be arrested for her political work. . . . We were not only Social Democrats

but Jews and star-wearers, which was doubly bad.'

Arguing against the dominant war propaganda of the Allies, giving the impression that the Germans were almost without exception supporters of concentration camps, torture, and beastliness, J.P.M. Millar stressed in 'Plebs' (August 1945) that German anti-fascists had been Hitlerism's first victims.

For, alongside the Nazis' terror, there was also unceasing workers' and socialists' resistance right through to the moment of the 'Liberation' in 1945.

Notwithstanding the Nazis' savage murder of socialists, communists and anarchists throughout Europe following the 20 July attempt on Hitler's life, important fragments of evidence in the ISC archive suggest at the very least that the Nazi terror machine during World War II was less totalitarian than the Allies' propaganda made out.

In this archive, where 'au-

thenticated' biographies of German anti-fascists can be found, there is an entry for Theo Thiele, an SDP secretary in Berlin until 1933.

Active

It simply states: 'Three years' underground work, three years in prison, again active in underground work.'

Then there is an entry for Rita Sprengel: 'Concentration camp in 1933-34, underground work, 1941 arrested because she helped Jews to flee to Switzerland, four years' concentration camp.'

As the siren call of fascism is once again being heard in various parts of Europe, the democratic left has a sacred duty to defend the honour of the known and unknown German anti-fascist socialists who suffered from fascist terrorism and are now victims of 'the assassins of memory'.

A proper stitch-up in criminal justice

BY MIKE COOKE

PARENTAL advice to children about never going out with dirty underwear has taken on a new meaning under the Criminal Justice Act 1994!

The Act, under section 32, brings in the infamous effective abolition of the right to silence. But section 34 also states that from a defendant's failure to explain 'objects, substances or marks' on their body, clothing, or the place where they are, the court can draw 'such inferences from the failure as appear proper'.

The latter phrase appears in sections 32 to 35 of the Act. Section 32 states that it applies to a failure to mention any fact which might reasonably be mentioned at the time of police questioning or when charged. Section

33 deals, in the same way, with failure to give evidence in court. Section 35 gives the same treatment to a defendant's failure to explain their presence at the scene of a crime.

But the bill does not explicitly abolish the right to silence or the obligation of a police officer to caution on arrest. In other words, the police still have to tell people they arrest that they have the 'right to remain silent', when in effect they don't!

'Reading the Bill, I felt much as I imagine a racing cyclist might feel when reading a sudden bulletin from the International Federation of Racing Cyclists, decreeing that all bicycles should have three wheels. In such circumstances the Federation might be expected to indicate in a little detail how this is to be achieved,' commented west London solicitor John Mackenzie in the 'New Law Journal' (13 May).

As a solicitor, Mackenzie is perplexed by the legislation: 'The Bill says nothing about the role of the solicitor. Is the advice to remain silent to be an acceptable reason for not men-

'The police still have to tell people they arrest that they have the "right to remain silent", when in effect they don't!'

tioning an otherwise mentionable fact under ss 32(1), 34 and 35?

'Section 32 talks about facts that might reasonably be mentioned. Sections 34 and 35 do not use the words "reasonably be mentioned" and

appear to make it an obligation for these facts to be given in interview subject to the sanction of the court drawing such inferences as appear proper.

'When the case gets to court, who will draw the inferences? Presumably, the jury. The Bill says nothing about how the possible failure to mention facts, or marks or presence is to be handled during the trial.

'Will the prosecutor be able to cross-examine on such failures? Will the judge be expected to sum up on them? How much of an otherwise inadmissible interview now becomes admissible? The Bill says nothing. Who decides these facts under s 32 might reasonably have been mentioned, judge or jury? Every prosecutor and judge will have a different view. All will end up in the Court of Appeal.'

That honourable court is where all logical cock-ups in legislation are sorted out, and 'precedents' set that guide future use of British law. It's staffed by the Lord Chief Justice of England, the Master of the Rolls, the Lords Justices of Appeal and the Judges of the High Court of Justice.

The Lord Chief Justice of England, the Right Honourable the Lord Taylor of Gosforth, earns £108,940. Master of the Rolls Right Honourable Sir Thomas Bingham rakes in £100,800. The 26 'Right Honourable' Lords Justices earn £96,720 apiece. And, the 14 merely 'Honourable' High Court judges get a paltry £87,620 each.

Between the one 'Right Honourable Dame' and the other 'Sirs' and 'Lords', 'Right' and merely 'Honourable', they net £3,951,140. These salaries guarantee the final stitches in the perfect cloth of bourgeois law.

A forward move for workers' internationalism

AT THE heart of the LIT congress was a new situation for both the working class and those fighting to rebuild the Fourth International. This new situation arises from the collapse of Stalinism and an upsurge of struggles involving sections of the working class and the peasantry throughout much of Latin America and other parts of the world.

Delegates from Brazil, Venezuela, Peru and other countries spoke of this spontaneous movement of the working class and peasantry and discussed their response to and participation in it.

Many referred to Workers Aid for Bosnia, a campaign in which there is collaboration between the Workers International and the LIT, as an example of the possibilities for rebuilding working-class internationalism and the Fourth International.

A liaison committee has been formed between the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International and the International Workers League (Fourth International), LIT-CI.

DOT GIBSON was the official representative of the Workers International at the LIT's fifth congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from 26 June to 3 July. She reports on the congress and the significance for the workers' movement and the rebuilding of the Fourth International of this decision to form the committee. Also on this page below is the LIT congress resolution on the liaison committee

At the same time nobody tried to hide the problems of leadership in the LIT. For instance, it was not possible for the out-going executive committee to give a united report or a document on the world economic and political situation and the tasks of their sections.

The congress was therefore opened by speakers from each of the four tendencies introduc-

ing their own reports. The two largest tendencies were the TR (Reconstruction Tendency), with its main leaders in Brazil, and the TCN (New Course Tendency), whose main leaders are from Argentina. There were two smaller and opposed tendencies: the TT (Trotskyist Tendency), led by Bill Hunter in Britain, and the TBI (Bolshevik Internationalist Tendency), based in Columbia.

It would be an injustice to all comrades in the LIT if I tried, in this short report, to elaborate the differences expressed at the congress. Members of the TCN and the TT warned of the danger of liquidating the party when the TR spoke of 'unconscious revolutions' and of being in favour of a more flexible approach to blocs and fusions with other groups and parties.

On the other hand TR members, who had just led the fight to break from the Workers Party of Brazil and launch the United Workers Socialist Party, were fearful that the TCN would miss opportunities in the rising mass movement.

Here was a reflection of the fact that we must learn to swim with the new tide, but not get drowned in it.

Dissolved

At the end of the congress the two principal tendencies and the TT dissolved. It was agreed that discussion would continue on South Africa, there was a joint response to the situation in the ex-USSR and eastern Europe, and the problems of party building in the concrete conditions of a number of countries.

The TBI representatives, declaring that the LIT and all tendencies in it had reneged on

Trotskyism, announced that they would report back to the Colombian section with a proposal to split with the LIT-CI, and agreed that if this was accepted they would recommend amicable but not politically collaborative relations.

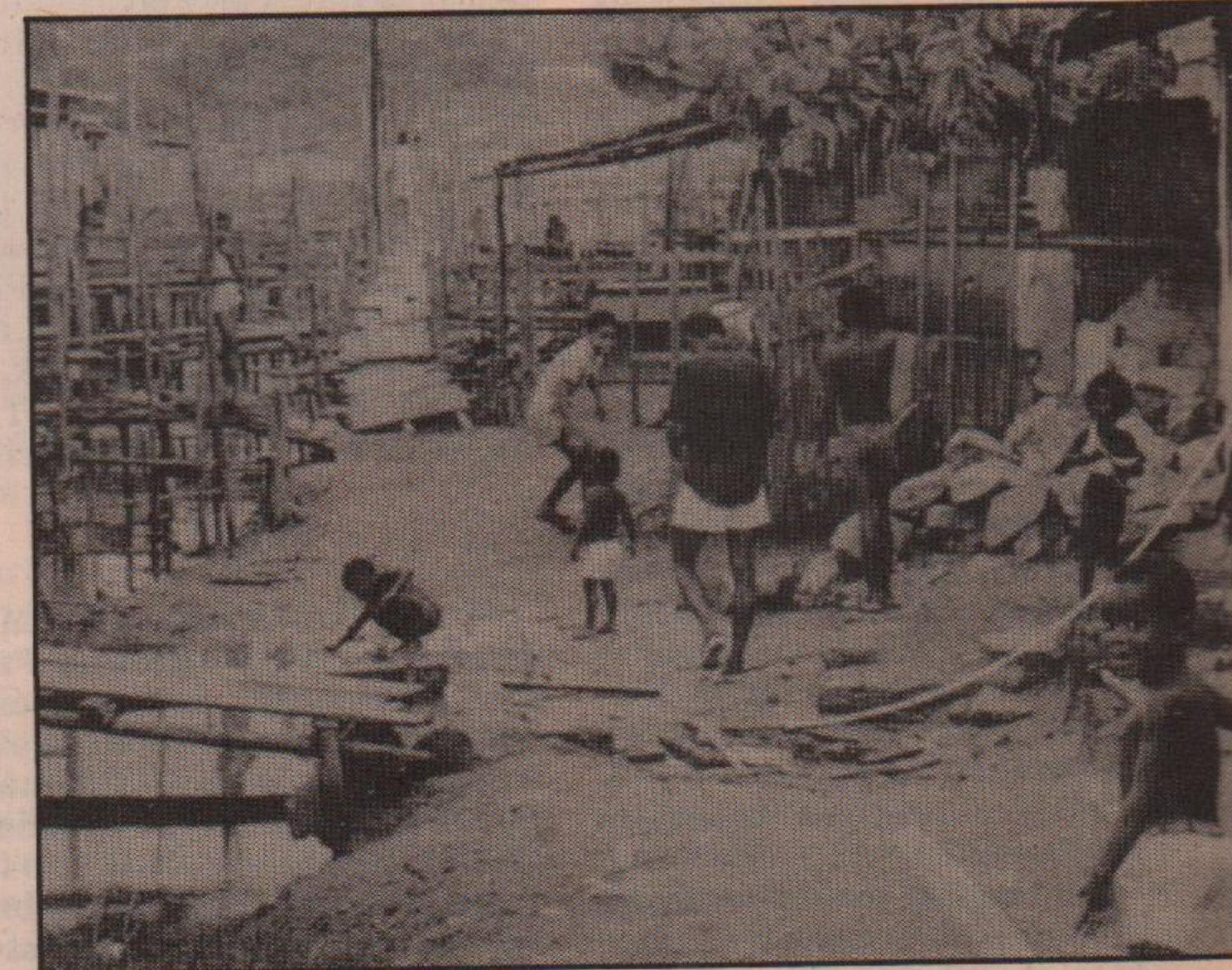
A meeting in London of the international secretariat of the Workers International, on 10 July, agreed to translate the documents of all the LIT tendencies and have an open discussion throughout the Workers International's membership. That is the significance of the liaison committee.

Linked

This development has arisen now because there is the beginning of a common understanding that the rebuilding of the workers' movement at the world level is intimately linked to the reconstruction of the Fourth International, and that the collapse of Stalinism has created new possibilities for this reconstruction.

A letter to the LIT from the Workers International in December 1993 said: 'Our primary concern is this: the aim which we share, of overcoming the long crisis of the Fourth International, can and must now be fought for under entirely new conditions, and it is urgently necessary to arrive at an understanding of these conditions which will guide our revolutionary practice.'

'We approach the discussion only from this point of view: through an open and frank discussion on perspectives, to all take our responsibility as Marxists for arriving at a common understanding of the most crucial struggles facing the work-



Brazilian slum: Latin America has seen an upsurge of struggle

ing class, and in the very first place, the key to all the struggles, the fight to resolve the crisis of revolutionary working-class leadership. This is surely the only basis for any regroupment internationally.'

For over six decades workers' internationalism was severely damaged by the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy in the former USSR and its lieutenants throughout the world.

After a long struggle by the workers and some intellectuals of the former USSR and eastern Europe against this bureaucracy (east Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968), it finally collapsed in 1989.

Stalinism's 'socialism in one country' was exposed as a reactionary theory that in practice murdered, imprisoned and tortured thousands of communists and led to the defeats of the workers in Spain, Germany and China in the 1920s and 1930s.

New opportunities now open up for reconstruction of working-class revolutionary leadership, but this can only be achieved by clearing out of the workers' movement the trade union and labour bureaucracies, and the building of workers' independence from imperialism, organisationally, politically and theoretically.

That is where the Fourth International comes in — only a party guided by the Marxist

world outlook can analyse this new situation and lead the working class in the struggle for power.

Marxism is continued only in the Fourth International, founded in 1938 [led by Leon Trotsky] out of the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalin and the Stalinist bureaucracy.

But, like the working class itself, the Fourth International has suffered under the blows of Stalinism. Weakened by the murder of Leon Trotsky and thousands of Left Oppositionists, the Fourth International was relatively isolated from the working class.

The explosions and splits in the Fourth International arising from fundamental differences of principle could not be understood by most leading workers who saw these splits as sectarian divisions of the movement.

In the new situation that was so clearly reflected at the LIT congress, it will now be possible to explain the significance of the history of those who have fought for the rebuilding of the Fourth International. This fight has been, and is, principally against those, such as the United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel and the forces led by Pierre Lambert who have had a long record of capitulation to Stalinism and reformism.

In this sense, the formation of the liaison committee marked a significant step forward

Resolution of the LIT congress on the liaison committee

Considering:

1. That the International Workers League — Fourth International (LIT) and the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WI) have developed a joint intervention in the Workers Aid for Bosnia campaign, and also a broader collaboration in various European countries;

2. That in the course of this political collaboration the existence was demonstrated of important agreements of principle and programme summarised in the common understanding that the struggle to resolve the crisis of leadership of the world proletariat, by rebuilding the Fourth International, can only be realised by way of a

ruthless struggle against all the counter-revolutionary apparatus and the liquidationist revisionist currents which capitulate to them. That the rebuilding of the Fourth International is a struggle intimately linked to the process of the reconstruction of the workers' movement at the world level;

3. That the Workers International has sent a letter to the LIT proposing the formation of a liaison committee;

This fifth world congress of the LIT resolves:

1. To salute the proposal of the WI as very positive and to accept it.

2. To mandate the international executive committee to propose to the WI a

founding declaration of the said international liaison committee. This declaration should set out the programmatic and political agreements that exist now, indicate the need for deepening joint intervention and establish the way in which the continuity of the programmatic and political discussion between the two currents should be developed.

The central point of the said declaration should be to affirm that the goal of the process is to explore the possibility of unifying our forces in a new international organisation so developing the fight to rebuild the Fourth International at a higher level.

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