

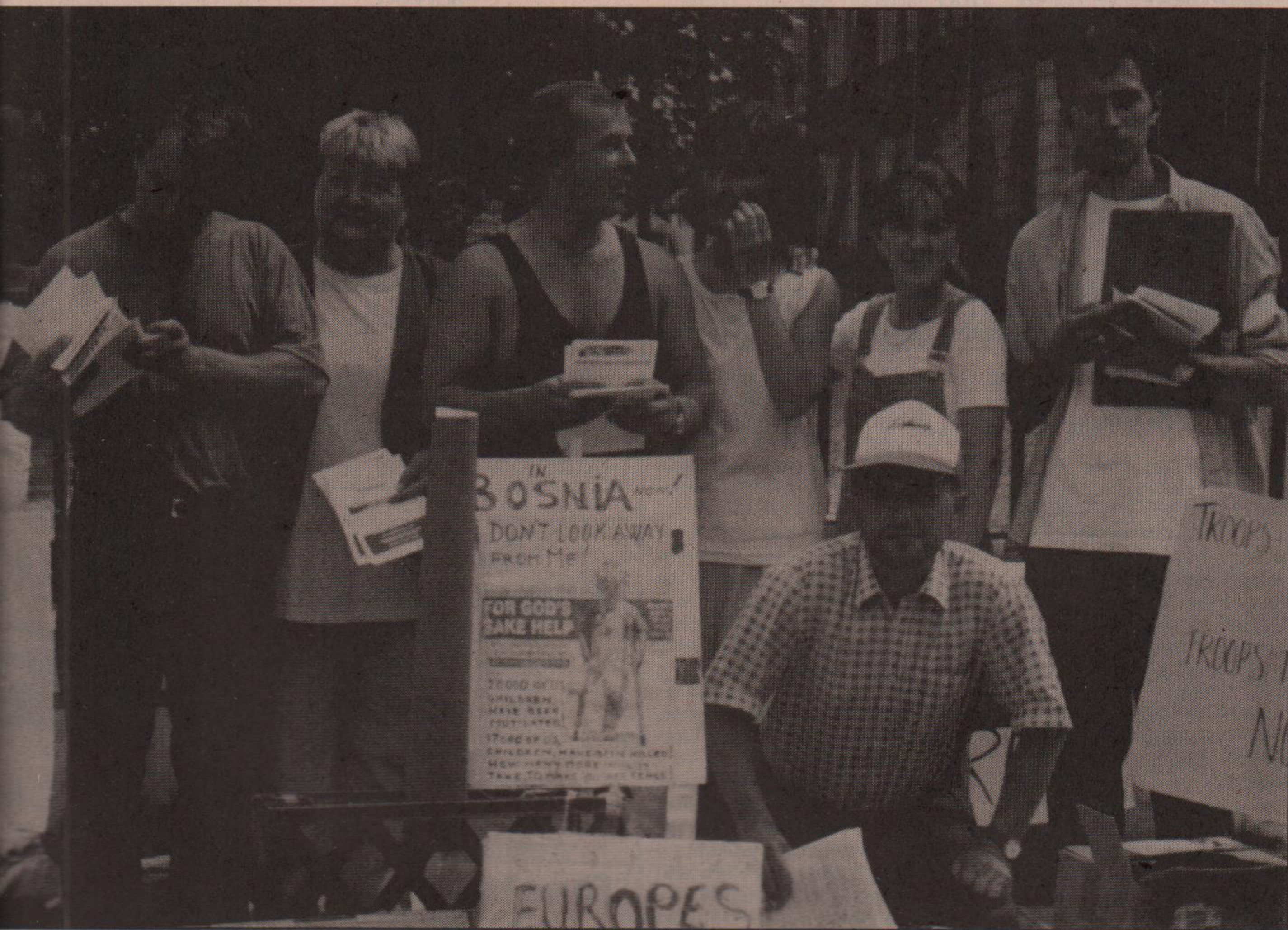
Tuzla backs Bosnian
PM against imperialist
carve-up plans

DEFEND

MULTI-ETHNIC

BOSNIA!

Join non-stop picket!



The non-stop picket opposite Downing Street will be continuing until parliament returns from its recess. Unless there is a government crisis (a not unlikely event) this will be in October. If you're in London go down and meet those taking part. Even better, phone 0171-240 7992 and take part yourself

Bradford demonstration for Bosnia-Herzegovina

In response to the fall of the so-called UN safe areas a group has formed in Bradford of trades unionists, socialists and community activists who have called for a march and demonstration in Bradford on Saturday 26 August. Starts from the Infirmary Fields, Bradford at 1pm. The Bradford Bosnia Solidarity Campaign can be contacted c/o the Weaver Community Centre, Laburnum Street, Bradford, WF4 7JH 0113 251045.

Bosnia Solidarity Campaign BOSNIA FORUM

Central Hall, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH, Saturday 9 September, 10.30am-5.30pm
For information: Tel/Fax 0171-240 7992.

Trafalgar Square is booked for 24 September for another Bosnia demonstration. Get in touch for further details!

IN WAR political life is different from in peace. But the last few days in Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown that the opposition to all forms of nationalism, voiced so loudly before the war, is still strong. Three years of war, isolation and suffering have not broken the desire for a society devoid of cultural divisions.

Last week, a conflict inside the government party, the SDA, that has been simmering for a long time, broke out into the open. Immediately the opinions of many people turned into united action.

The SDA Prime Minister Haris Siladzic threatened to resign if he was not able to govern as he wanted. Behind this quarrel between Siladzic and the SDA President Alija Izetbegovic are many issues.

But underlying all of them is the tension between those who are prepared to accept the United Nations-brokered division of Bosnia and the emergence of a predominantly 'Muslim statelet' and those who want to regain an undivided multi-cultural Bosnia.

Bastion

After Siladzic threatened to resign, he immediately went to Tuzla, the working-class bastion of an undivided society.

Even though the Tuzla citizens are overwhelming anti-SDA, they immediately took sides in the dispute.

Following Siladzic's arrival in Tuzla, many, including uniformed soldiers, went out into the streets to collect signatures in support of Siladzic's position.

In two days, they collected about 27,000 and this support forced the SDA to keep Si-

FROM BOB MYERS
in Tuzla, Bosnia

ladzic as prime minister. This is not the only sign of political life in Tuzla.

After thousands of refugees arrived in Tuzla there were demonstrations outside the UN headquarters. Some young people whose friends had been killed threw rocks at UN vehicles and broke the windows.

Posters

The SDA then put up posters saying it — not the Bosnian government — would take responsibility for the future of the refugees.

The Tuzla citizens immediately replied with their own posters asking why the SDA was responsible and not the government? And, who was responsible for the future of Tuzla citizens? Were they to become beggars?

For a long time it has been the people of the whole of Tuzla region who have stopped the complete destruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina society, but they have had little say in government.

The last few days have shown that they remain a decisive factor in the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Yesterday Tuzla was shelled and one woman killed. But this random terror does not break the working-class spirit here.

Received 14 August

Workers Aid in Sussex

Workers Aid for Bosnia supporters in Sussex took their message to the International Mela Music Festival at Crawley recently.

Helped by top band, the Bundhu Boys (from Zimbabwe), who read out a Workers Aid message, the team collected £782 in donations from festival-goers.

Two activities coming up in Brighton merit support from all workers and friends of Bosnia. On Tuesday, 22

August, there's a chance to meet members of the trade union aid convoy just back from Tuzla. And on 9 September, Workers Aid is holding a benefit at the Barn, in Southwick, with 'Attila the Stockbroker' (see announcements, page 2).

Workers Aid supporters from Sussex are also taking part in the non-stop picket in Whitehall at weekends.

Workers Aid can be contacted on 0171-582 5462.

THERE is no doubt that the military offensive of Tudjman's Croatian forces has created a more favourable military situation for the fight of Bosnia against Karadzic's forces.

However, it is of even greater importance to recognise that in the final analysis there are no military solutions to the crisis in the Balkans. The only solution is a political one that involves the establishment of political independence on the part of the working class — in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Serbia and in Croatia.

But this in no sense means that we in the slightest accept the position of the ex-Stalinists and the pacifists that we don't take sides in the war in the Balkans. This 'neutral' line — shared by the Socialist Workers' Party, Tony Benn, and others — in practice means lining up with the British ruling class which has been the most consistent supporter of Milosevic's aim of a Greater Serbia.

The 'peace line' of Benn and his friends is very clear. By a 'political solution' they mean: stop the fighting and let the imperialists get on with the carve-up of Bosnia.

* * * * *

What then is the political solution that we propose? Unlike many on the left who are content to invoke empty abstractions such as, 'only the working class can resolve the crisis' we have set out a definite and concrete line of advance on the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

From the start, when we first helped establish Workers Aid for Bosnia we saw the key to the solution in the Balkans as the re-establishment of internationalism in the working-class movement, an international-

Workers Press

A real political solution for Balkan peoples

ism so badly damaged after years of Stalinist betrayal.

The aid convoys that have been sent regularly to the mining town of Tuzla and other places were for us part of this aim: how to bring the working class in the former Yugoslavia into a common struggle with the working class of Europe as a whole.

Together with this proposal we put forward a plan for a conference of socialists and workers in Yugoslavia, the Balkans and internationally.

The break in the situation in Britain — where two large demonstrations in defence of Bosnia have been recently held, where a successful non-stop picket has been established and where work is underway for a Bosnia Forum — and the contacts established in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the convoys and Workers Aid for Bosnia generally mean that we have reached a crucial stage in going forward to such a conference.

* * * * *

In the end the 'solution' will be a new Yugoslavian federation on a new basis. A federation where no one group dominates and the rights of all minorities are defended by all.

The fact that such decisive gains have been possible in our work in defence of Bosnia is striking confir-

mation that the collapse of Stalinism has created a new, unprecedented, relationship of class forces for the rebuilding of the working-class movement — which means above all the re-establishment of its internationalism — as well as of its leadership.

* * * * *

That is why the political solution for which we have fought, far from being utopian is the only realistic one, one that we must now renew our fight to realise.

At the same time, in a period of such rapid changes there is a real danger that we can be left behind by the sheer speed of events or by the unexpected forms in which such changes take place.

There is no doubt that the situation in Serbia itself will now develop rapidly. The economic crisis is now extremely deep, with inflation wrecking workers' lives and the economy.

As is usual in such cases, opposition to the regime at first takes that of a general democratic character.

Many intellectuals and other sections of the middle class, disillusioned with the war, who previously supported Milosevic, are now deserting him.

The recent victories of the Croatian forces can only speed up this process, even though, of themselves, they cannot resolve the crisis.

We have fought consistently for the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia.

But, in line with our insistence that there can be no military solution to the crisis in the Balkans, we must encourage all those who take up this demand to understand that it means fighting one's 'own' government', that is that it involves a political fight on a fundamental issue.

In other words, at the very centre of our work is the gathering and mobilisation of the working-class political forces, and the re-construction of an international leadership for these forces.

And in this fight the working class of the former Yugoslavia will play a decisive role. The working class of Croatia should mobilise independently of the Croatian government for solidarity with the working class of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

* * * * *

The support of the Croatian working class for the right of Bosnian self-determination is now a decisive factor in the situation. Here was the significance of the message of support sent by trade unionists in Croatia to the 22 July rally held in Central Hall (see Workers Press, 29 July).

But also critical is the role of the British labour movement. As is widely understood in Bosnia, the most consistent supporter of the aims of a Greater Serbia has been the British foreign office. In a strong Serbia they have seen their political and economic interests in the region best served.

That is why the campaign in support of Bosnia must now be stepped up in the British working-class movement.

Letters

Greek fascists in Srebrenica

EVEN before the start of the 'ethnic cleansing' by the Serb Chetnik forces led by Karadzic and Milosevic, Greek fascists have been in the front line together with their Serb counterparts for decades.

Since the beginning of the war in 1992 about 100 Greek fascists have been fighting in Bosnia. The bourgeois daily newspaper, 'Ethnos', reported on 13 July:

'Last night four flags were raised on the remnants of the Orthodox church in Srebrenica: the Serbian, the Greek, the Verginian [Bulgarian? — ed.] and the Byzantine flags are flying, one next to the other, and this fact is an indication of the friendship and solidarity of the two peoples, of the gratitude of the Serbian soldiers to the Greek volunteers who are fighting together with them.'

'On the side of the Serbs in the siege of Srebrenica, there were ten Greeks: Antonis Mitkos, Tr. Basiliadis, Sp. Tzanopoulos, G. Lymberidis, K. Kiriakidis, H. Dimoulas, B. Shizas, K. Kaltsounis, and the Greek-Romanian A. Florin.

'Last night they celebrated together with the Serbian soldiers the withdrawal of the United Nations "peace-keepers" from Srebrenica, which meant the town coming under the complete control of the town by the Serbs. Just after the victory, they raised the flags and sang the national anthems of the two countries.'

These fascists enjoy the full backing of the Greek bourgeois class, the bourgeois politicians, the bourgeois parties, Greek Or-

thodox church and the trade union leadership. Even the Greek Communist Party has offered Karadzic its full support and has been in the vanguard of the wave of nationalism.

And some so-called Trotskyists, including Michael Pablo (Raptis) and Michael Savas, have given support to Karadzic claiming that he and Milosevic are fighting against imperialism.

In reality, Milosevic and Karadzic are two of the most forcible protectors and agents of the epoch of imperialist barbarism.

We, together with the victims of 'ethnic cleansing', will not forgive or forget any of the perpetrators of these crimes.

Nikos Loukidis
Athens

Stalinist shenanigans

THE report in Workers Press ('Communist Party may split TGWU left', 12 July), about the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) meeting to put up a candidate for the Transport and General Workers Union executive, ought to ring a few bells for union members who have supported Workers Aid for Bosnia.

Early last year, some TGWU Region 1 members raised £225 for Workers Aid. A leading TGWU steward on the London buses had driven on the first convoy, and some experienced dockers had made sure lorries were properly loaded.

These TGWU members were perturbed to find a story being put around in the union that Workers Aid for Bosnia was gun-running and had already carried

'tons of arms' to Bosnia. (If you ask me, chance would be a fine thing, but that's a personal opinion!)

When members protested, the late Pete Haggard, executive member and 'broad left' figure backed by the CPB, denied the story had come from him. So, I'm told, did his fellow cab driver Pat Hicks, brother of the CPB general secretary. How the 'tons of arms' story had entered executive minutes became almost as big a mystery as how Workers Aid, with its poor battered lorries, had supposedly smuggled those heavy weapons through six hostile checkpoints.

But what happened next was remarkable. The TGWU's emergency and general purposes committee decided to freeze members' donations to Workers Aid on the grounds that its appeal to branches had been clearly 'political'. The Region 1 committee then resolved that emergency and general purposes should decide 'on an alternative organisation to send the branch donations to'.

As Charlie Pottins commented in Workers Press on 23 July 1994, this was 'a precedent the Tories and employers would love' (i.e. being able to decide where money donated by union members should be sent). The episode should also serve to warn us what sort of shenanigans to watch out for from Stalinists in the union executives.

TGWU member
London SW1

Fight Nazi candidate

ON 31 August there will be a local

council by-election in Hanworth. Nazi Warren Glass is standing for the British National Party. We are writing to ask for your assistance in making sure that he gets only the derisory vote that he deserves.

The past year has seen some significant successes in the fight against the Nazis. Last month the BNP was forced to close its headquarters in Welling. In the East End of London, where the BNP had Derek Beacon elected as a councillor, he was defeated by local people at the next election. They are on the run both electorally and on the street.

However, we can't afford to be complacent. The conditions which cause the despair that the Nazis grow out of, unemployment, bad housing, etc., are still here. On top of this the Tories are increasingly trying to whip up racism to divert anger away from themselves. This is illustrated by Home Secretary Michael Howard's constant attacks on asylum seekers and scares about immigration, as well as Met chief Paul Condon's recent racist announcement about black muggers. All this can fuel the Nazis.

Therefore, in the coming weeks, the Anti-Nazi League is organising a series of activities in Hanworth to ensure that the Nazis are kept out. We are also launching a statement which we want local people, MPs, trade unions, etc., to sign.

Don't worry if you don't have a lot of spare time as even an hour or two will make a difference. If you have any enquiries or ideas please phone 0171-924 0333. We also welcome donations as we need to print leaflets and posters.

West London Anti-Nazi League
London N4

WE WELCOME LETTERS
SEND THEM TO: WORKERS PRESS,
PO BOX 735, LONDON SW8 1YB
— OR FAX 0171-387 0569

Also letter
— page 6

Welcome back to Tuzla trade union convoy

RECEPTION: TUESDAY 22 August, 8pm, New Kensington pub, Brighton
Live Music, Food. Tickets £3 (£2 concession)

Workers Aid for Bosnia: Music Benefit

Attila the Stockbroker and supporting bands
SATURDAY 9 September, 8pm, The Barn, Southwick, Brighton

INDEX BOOKCENTRES

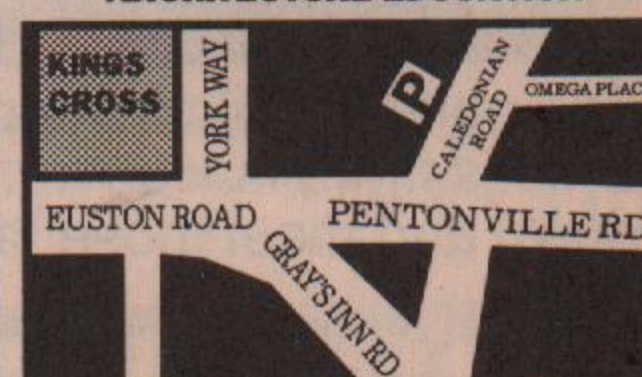
Central London
28 Charlotte Street,
London W1 1HJ
0171-636 3532
Brixton
10-12 Atlantic Road,
London SW9 8HY
0171-274 8342

Burston Strike School 1995 rally 1914-39

81st Anniversary
Bring banners
Saturday 3 September
Burston near Diss, Norfolk

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Advance Notice MEETING

10th anniversary of the
expulsion of G. Healy
from the WRP
Saturday 7 October 1995

2pm
Conway hall
Red Lion Square, London WC1

LAMBETH: a reply to the Appleby report

BY TED KNIGHT
Leader of Lambeth council
1978-86

can reveal that at no time during a charade of an inquiry was I asked to appear before it. Yet my administration is condemned out of hand. What is fair about that?

In her journeys to Lambeth Appleby failed to notice that the borough has one of the highest concentrations of single-parent families, a high number of elderly persons, a huge housing waiting list, massive unemployment, particularly amongst the youth, and a very low income level. There is no mention of any of this in the report. Anyone reading it might think that Lambeth was some prosperous, leafy suburb.

Brixton

She might have referred to the Brixton disturbances of 1981 and 1985, which resulted from frustration at widespread deprivation. She did not. Appleby should have learned much from the thorough and widely-respected report that Lord Scarman carried out into the disturbances. Scarman, of course, called for more government resources for the borough.

While the Thatcher government ignored these problems, Labour councillors were elected to fight for Lambeth's needs and to deliver quality services. And that we did.

In the mid-1980s, Lambeth joined with other Labour councillors to resist rate-capping. We did so because rate-capping meant slashing services and jobs, not because we wanted to invent an excuse for opposing the government.

The policy we fought on at



The fight against rate-capping: thousand joined marches like this one in London on 6 March 1985

that time was approved and supported by the Labour Party executive and its front-bench spokespersons. Although we never halted rate-capping, we did win more money for Lambeth.

The people of Lambeth endorsed our policy at the ballot box. In 1986, Labour achieved its

biggest majority on the council. So when the report condemns us, it also condemns the people of Lambeth for voting for us.

Appleby accuses us of operating an unwritten policy undermining the collection of rents and other charges. Again, no evidence is produced. So her assertion

becomes a 'fact'. This is not good enough for a QC.

Did we experience problems in rent collection? Yes. Perhaps we should have evicted more families, taking the children into care, or rehoused those in rent arrears. Those were the alternatives to negotiating with some of the poorest tenants in Britain.

We are accused of employing people who were unqualified,

the head of the Commission for Racial Equality, was the country's first race relations officer when at Lambeth, and then became deputy chief executive.

What of the charge that we pushed ahead with house building. Again, we plead guilty! Those housed from the waiting list will certainly thank us.

What is the real background to Lambeth's present chaos? Since 1986, the Tory government has rapidly pressed ahead with the privatisation of council services. Outside contractors have flooded in, vying with each other for lucrative jobs.

Abuse

This opened the doors to widespread abuse. The majority of Labour councillors who followed us backed off from challenging what the Tories were imposing on the borough. As a result, jobs were cut, services were decimated, and demoralisation spread throughout the council.

Senior officers became all-powerful, uncontrolled by the elected members. Rumours of fraud and corruption were used to stifle critics.

Even Appleby reveals that chief officers now don't even bother to write reports for councillors but simply tell them how to vote. We agree — this is not democracy in any sense.

Appleby is right to point to the chaos in Lambeth. But what a shame that she couldn't identify the real remedy. What Lambeth needs is councillors who will once more stand up for the borough — its people, its services and its environment — and for local democracy. Those who can't do this should step aside.



Ted Knight

inexperienced and unsuitable. But where is the evidence? Don't look for it in the report.

The report is an attack on our equal opportunities policy, guaranteeing access to jobs for women, ethnic minorities and the disabled. Perhaps Appleby has not experienced prejudice, but many Lambeth people have.

We employed none other than Herman Ouseley to pioneer much of this work. Ouseley, who is now

Union leaders leave rail workers up the junction

BY PETER GIBSON

SIR GEORGE YOUNG, the government's transport secretary, tried to cast some doubts over the implementation of the deal between British Rail and the train drivers' leaders in the ASLEF union.

But the deal — for a reduction in the working week from 39 to 37 hours in 1996 and a 3 per cent wage increase — is more likely to mean an extra two hours' overtime. The average figure of nine hours per week overtime by rail workers is a sure sign that their basic pay is too low to live on.

Judges ruled that the increased offer from British rail of a measly quarter per cent meant that the strike vote of 5,732

to 3,757 was no longer valid. The strike ballot had referred to the 2.75 per cent and did not cover the 3 per cent offer, the court ruled. But next day many trains did not run and there was a surprising level of sickness and mechanical faults on the lines!

There were a number of pressures on ASLEF leaders to settle. On the second ballot, drivers were asked if they accepted 3 per cent. ASLEF did not seek a new mandate from members for strike action.

Rejection

So the clear rejection of the 3 per cent offer left the union without a policy and in confusion.

Could it be that outside formal negotiations the ASLEF leader-

ship was threatened with de-recognition by the first of the privatised rail companies — the London, Tilbury and Southend line.

British Rail has also threatened ASLEF that it could stop collecting union contributions from the payroll and could be another reason why union leaders were desperate to cut a deal. BR did just that to the other main rail union, the RMT, causing the loss of thousands of members and creating a financial crisis.

BR has also threatened to withdraw facilities from ASLEF executive members, including half-time off with full pay to carry out their union work.

The members of the union clearly needed the extra cash. They are angry at the way judges

and the courts have said that a quarter per cent wage increase represented a new offer.

Missing

Members know this may be the last chance for a national show of strength before the privatisation break-up of the rail network. The only thing which seems to have been missing was leadership: from the ASLEF executive and its general secretary, Lew Adams.

Faced with the government's crisis in their attempts to privatise the rail network, this was the time for the rail unions to step up the struggle, not step back from it. This was the time to mobilise the votes, not for union leaders to keep their heads down.

Communist Party puts off TGWU decision

BY MARY IDE

THE central committee of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) met last weekend in London, discussed problems the party is facing in London (No.1) Region of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), and decided not to take a decision on whom to back for the union's executive.

Discussion at times became heated, with one woman member admitting that the party was losing control of the left. It fell to former Ford convenor and chairman of the liaison committee for

defence of trade unions Kevin Halpin to warn against sectarianism, and try to cool the discussion.

The old-style 'Morning Star' supporters in the CPB want someone to take the place of Peter Haggart, who died earlier this year. Haggart ran the union's 'broad left' for many years, and though he denied he was a party member, they felt he was someone they could rely on.

Among possible candidates suggested were CPB members in the former Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union (EPIU), recently merged with the TGWU, some of whom have a base of support in the car industry.

But no decision was taken yet on whether to stand a candidate in opposition to Steve Riley, the sitting executive member who is also union convenor at Fords, Dagenham.

It seems to have been agreed by one CPB faction in their meeting before the central committee, not to push their case for supporting London taxi driver Pat Hicks, brother of the CPB general secretary Mike Hicks.

This may have been because of the non-CPB members of the TGWU who had been invited to attend this meeting. The number of these who work in the union's head office may indicate the

problem the CPB has influencing events following Haggart's death, and its hopes to remedy this in future.

Communist Party of Britain members and anyone thinking of joining can be assured of one thing. The real decisions were not taken at the central committee meeting you attended, but elsewhere.

That includes the decision to run a candidate from the Manchester area for the TGWU executive, hoping he can take up Haggart's role. But, as those active in the TGWU know, things do not always work out the way you plan.

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)

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

Inside left HMSWP

LADEN sunset over the sea, great
ze-up in Brindisi, late back on
rd to a mild rebuke by the Old
h because we're sailing next morn-
for Montenegro. This jolly Adri-
cruise was BBC1's HMS Brilliant
ednesday night, 9 August), on
rd to stop arms reaching 'the war-
g sides' in Bosnia.

Over on BBC2, 'Siege Doctors'
icted British medical volunteers
the carnage of Sarajevo. One of
m tried to picture it happening to
nchester or Leeds. I can imagine
at their citizens would say about a
eign government ordering its
y to stop them receiving weapons
their defence.

When the Royal Navy intercepted
ps heading for the Spanish Repub-
the British government called it
n-Intervention', but others called
Blockade'. Nowadays it's an arms
bargo, but the fake lefts, from
IS (Her Majesty's Stalinists)
orning Star' to 'Socialist Worker',
tend it's 'non-intervention'.

BBC news led on 'growing suspi-
n' about American 'motives' for
easing photographs of alleged
ss graves at Srebrenica. Whose
picion? Probably someone at the
eign Office. What's the use of
rying thousands of murdered Mus-
s, with two week's media coverage
fleeing Krajina Serbs, only to have
neone remind people what hap-
ned. Damned questionable motives,
at?!

Demanding 'an immediate end to
outside intervention and arms
plies', 'Socialist Worker' (9 and 12
gust) asserted, like Michael Por-
o, that the Croat recapture of Kra-
a constituted 'ethnic cleansing'.

A photograph of weeping women
(August) was captioned 'Forgotten
the Western media: Bosnian Serb
ugees fleeing the Croat offensive'
(August). If they were 'forgotten',
om did we keep seeing on televi-
n news, and where did 'Socialist
orker' get its photo? But it keeps
etending its line on Bosnia is
posed to that of the Tories!

The people who were forgotten
re those of the Bihac area of Bos-
a, re-united with the outside world
er three years of Serb Chetnik
ge, and receiving their first aid
nvoy after months of hunger. They
d been facing the same grisly fate
those in Srebrenica. But 'Socialist
orker', having virtually tried to
euse the barbarities committed at
ebrenica, admonished Bosnians:

'Anyone who thinks that the
lkan war is between the "good"
snian side and the "bad" Serbs
ould look at the Bosnians' friends,
The Bosnians have allied them-
ves with a right-wing Croat gov-
nment which adopted the insignia
the wartime fascist Ustashe....'

'The Croats played a central role in
arting the fighting in ex-Yu-
slavia' (forget Vukovar, destroyed
the Serb-run Yugoslav army, and
get 'Socialist Worker's' 'neutrali-
s').

What's more, it claimed, the Bos-
an Army was getting American-
ade M16 rifles and other assistance
om the Western powers'. Perhaps
ocialist Worker' thinks Bosnians
ghting with their backs to the wall
ould refuse arms from any govern-
ent they dislike? Or submit to real
rrors of fascism — ethnic cleans-
g-concentration camps and slaugh-
r — rather than tolerate the
ghbours using its 'insignia'?

Incidentally, the *Sahovnica* (red
d white checkerboard) on the Croa-
an flag about which Foreign Office-
eck academics, Stalinists and
ocialist Worker' have been fussing,
g predates the Ustashe, and out-
ted them as the symbol of the Croat
ublic within 'socialist' Yugoslavia.
t why let such facts spoil their lit-
-discussion?

Charlie Pettins

Last week Workers Press carried a review of Ken Loach and Jim Allen's new film on the Spanish Revolution, 'Land and Freedom'. Mentioned in that review was hostile criticism of the film from Jeff Sawtell in the Stalinist daily 'Morning Star' (4 August). Here Bill Hunter replies to the distortions of history made by Sawtell

THERE was a stench of Stalinism in the 'Morning Star' of Friday 4 August, where Jeff Sawtell had a long review of Ken Loach's film on the Spanish Civil War: *Land and Freedom*.

Loach's film portrays the Spanish events of 1936-39, and the betrayal of the Spanish revolution which helped to pave the road to World War II (see review in Workers Press, 12 August).

Sawtell calls Loach's film a 'scurrilous rewriting of history' and like a pickpocket shouting 'Stop thief!' adopts the *scurrilous* method of Stalinism in dealing with opponents.

Under Stalinism in the Soviet Union there was erected the most monstrous lie machine in the world as part of the secret police establishment, the GPU, which enforced the rule of the Soviet bureaucratic elite through torture, murder and labour camps. It was responsible for the scenarios of confessions in the Moscow Trials which have now been completely and thoroughly exposed as frame-ups.

In Sawtell's 'Morning Star' article there were, once again, the lying assertions and implications, the half-truths, the amalgams, the unproved distortions. He even tried to smear Ken Loach and Jim Allen by implying that they now bask in the plaudits of the Establishment.

Shame-faced

Noreen Branson, in her *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941*, at least was a little shame-faced when she touched on the vicious Stalinist world-wide campaign against Trotskyism, even though the result, in her book was weasel-phrases implying the blame was on the victims, not the murderers.

'Anger at the splitting tactics of the POUM was to lead to the acceptance of totally false allegations concerning Trotskyists,' she wrote on page 244.

Sawtell, however, goes right back to the filth of the GPU, and that 1946 monument of Stalinist libel, *The Great Conspiracy against Russia* by Sayers and Kahn, published by Collett's Holdings Ltd. It is over 400 pages long, with lies on every page.

Among other fabrications, it asserted on page 296: 'It was discovered [that] Nin and the other POUM leaders were actually fascist agents working with Franco and that they had been carrying on a systematic campaign of sabotage, espionage and terrorism against the Spanish government.'

Murdered

Sawtell says it is a lie 'born of Trotskyist dogma' to say that the 'communists' in Spain murdered and tortured their allies. It is, however, now well established that Stalinist leaders and the GPU — not the Communist Party rank-and-file or the volunteers of the International Brigade — murdered and tortured opponents of Stalinist policies including Trotskyists, and leaders and rank-and-file members of the POUM.

The POUM (the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) was a 'centrist' party: a party that wavered between reformist and revolutionary policies. The POUM collaborated with the Independent Labour Party in Britain.

One of the POUM's internationally well-known leaders was Andrés Nin, a former Communist Party leader who had been secretary of the Communist Red International of Labour Unions and had rallied to the Trotskyist Left Opposition. Later,

The sto

Trotsky had differences with Nin over the way the POUM was formed and also over its entry into the Catalan Popular Front government.

There was a GPU network with its own prisons in Spain which secretly arrested Nin and foully murdered him when the Soviet interrogators



POUM leader Andrés Nin

found they could not use him in a show trial against the POUM.

Andrés Nin ended, as Trotsky considered him, a heroic revolutionary; one report declared that he had shouted 'Long live the Fourth International' before he was executed.

The activities of the GPU are

documented in Hugh Thomas's well-researched book *The Spanish Civil War* (Pelican, 1968), which Sawtell misquotes in trying to give credence to his implication that the Nazis had a hand in the Barcelona uprising of 1937. We gladly accept Thomas as an honest historian.

Thomas writes that the refusal of Nin 'to admit his guilt saved the lives of his friends'. He reports (pages 713 and 714): 'In 1938, the leaders of the POUM (except, of course, for Nin) were at last brought to trial....'

'Republican Ministers and ex-Ministers, headed by Largo Caballero and Zugazagoitia, gave evidence in POUM's favour. The judgement found the POUM to be true Socialists and absolved them of treason and espionage.'

Questions

We are sure that Sawtell has read — but chose to ignore — *Dialogue on Spain* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1976). In it Regis Debray and Max Gallo asked questions of the then General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, Santiago Carrillo. Carrillo said: 'Now, certainly, I don't believe that Nin went to Burgos or Berlin. I believe it to be possible that he was executed in our zone.'

Now let us look at the real criminals who, at the close of the Spanish Civil War, were determining their policy on the basis of seeking agreements with the Nazis and whom Sawtell's distortions cover up — the leaders of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Kremlin.

Again I will quote Hugh Thomas, although I suggest that those who want a true history should also read Trotsky's writings of the time. They cannot fail to be impressed by the way Trotsky foresaw the movement

The Edinburgh Festival — Terry Brotherstone

Midnight on a summer

SUDDENLY, not for the first time, things get heated. 'This music come out of... slavery, Les. It's got to come from that source or it doesn't mean a thing.'

Les shouts back that his forebears were dying as wage-slaves in the English factories when jazz was born. 'When I first heard the blues, I knew it wasn't just for black guys. I knew it was for me too.'

Les Padmore (Jack Shepherd) is the pianist in his own quartet which is playing Wes's Jazz Cellar in London. The others are Tony, the drummer and only black member (Rhashan Stone); Joe, the slickly dressed saxophonist (Darrell d'Silva); and Harry (John Bywater) who plays bass and does drugs.

They're at each other's throats except when they're making music and it all comes together... just.

The tension is high tonight. Wes — in the sixties he was active in 'one of those far left revolutionary groups, the S.L. something or other' and used to sell 'the Workers Express' — is dying in St Thomas's. His wife Joanne (Mary Rutherford) provides a bottle of Scotch to help everyone through. They are joined by Sharon (Julie Hewlett), the girl-friend Joe is in the process of ditching.

She's also Tony's sister. Their father is a fundamentalist (meeting him is 'like a close encounter with the book of Genesis') who thinks Tony should be making the trains run, not coaxing rhythm out of his drums. Tony is tortured by his family ties but can't break them....

It's very hot outside, and the Edinburgh Fringe is getting underway. *Chasing the Moment* by Jack Shepherd (the leading actor known for many roles in socialist theatre, and as ITV's Inspector Wycliffe, has written the piece too) is funny, and throws in some passable music, but it's a serious two-hour stint of drama. It ought to last twenty minutes longer and allow us an interval, but time is money at the Fringe, so they play straight through.

And in the afternoon. The evenings at prestige venues like *The Pleasance* are replete with stand-ups, well-kent TV faces, or would-be career-comics risking all to be spotted. So it's not so usual as you might think to come upon fringe theatre, especially fringe English theatre done well. Shepherd's 'Les Padmore quartet' turn adversity to advantage.

They use a student cabaret bar to convince you that you cannot see the sunlight, that you're really in a jazz cellar 'around midnight'. They act on all sides of you in a such a naturalistic way that you want to join in, express a view on white people playing jazz, or just saunter over to the bar and order.

Quality

Festival-goers seeking at least one show which lives dangerously but guarantees quality, this is for you.

Meanwhile, over in Glasgow, some socialist groups were holding a conference on the future of Scotland. 'Is there a workshop on Bosnia?', a col-

league inquired. 'No,' came the reply, 'this is about domestic issues.'

How, by comparison, do the culture-mongers shape up, when it comes to attitudes to the real world?

To its credit, the Edinburgh Fringe has, since 1992, tried to recognise that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is a 'domestic issue'.

Giving the lead has been the inexhaustible fringe impresario, Professor Ricky Demarco. He proclaims that you can't stage the world's biggest arts festival on the north-western periphery of Europe while ignoring the fact that human culture is being reduced to a state of barbarism in the south-east.

Demarco's *European Art Foundation* this year bills — amongst its international array of playmakers (notably from eastern Europe) — two companies from Tuzla, the Bosnian town which has striven hard to maintain its multi-culturalism.

All next week the Tuzla Youth Theatre stages *Fly out of the Cage* (11.30am) — 'archetypal performances as the characters reveal more of themselves at prominent periods in their lives'. And the National Theatre Tuzla perform 'a satirical comedy about egoists in power', *Requiem for a King* (nightly at 7.30). The week after, the Youth Theatre's *Dream about a Little Prince* is on at 11.30am daily.

Others too try to grapple with how art can respond to the Balkan catastrophe. The Scottish company Fifth Estate, in Allan Sharpe's *Playing Sarajevo* (Netherbow Theatre),

involve themselves in a kind of extended pun when a theatre in a city torn by civil war is taken over as the makeshift operating theatre or a military hospital. The trouble is that the script is too full of clever ideas and too little rooted in a wrestling with what's happening in the Bosnian capital.

Prompted

It's as though — prompted by the 1993 events when American intellectual Susan Sontag produced Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo under siege — Sharpe has revived a long-pondered idea for a play, and tried to graft it on to the current situation, without defining his own standpoint towards the war.

The best moments are when Art (in the shape of a mysterious actor-manager played by the author) is confronted with the limitations on its power to heal and reconcile souls, as the war's former victims, now in the ascendant, explain how the brutalities they have witnessed are the source of their implacable need for vengeance.

For assured professionalism many turn to the world-renowned *Traverse*, which has a much better balanced programme this year than last. Sue Glover's captivating and instructive *Bondagers* provides a home base for an international game plan — in which key roles are ascribed to a well-performed, if under-realised, production of Ariel ('Death and the Maiden') Dorfman's *Reader*,

bench of Stalinism

of Stalin's diplomacy and its effects.

Thomas (page 677) gives an illuminating example of Soviet aid to Spain being limited by the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy: early in 1939, Litvinov complained to Louis Fischer, the American journalist who acted as arms purchaser for the Republic, about the Republican retreats. "If you gave them 500 more aircraft, they could win the war," said Louis Fischer. Litvinov protested that these would help Russia more in China than in Spain.

Agreement

Stalin was preparing for an agreement with Hitler, which later came about in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Thomas reports: 'It was a policy which Stalin had indeed contemplated as a possibility even at the most enthusiastic period of the Popular Front. But now this policy became the only way, as it seemed. This change naturally had its effect on the Spanish Civil War. Stalin's Government desired to have its hands free to take any action which it judged necessary for its self defence. This would demand an end to Russia's continued commitment in the Spanish War, and particularly of the army of the Comintern, the International Brigades.'

Ken Loach and Jim Allen are to be congratulated on their film, which helps meet the present vital need to rescue history for new generations who begin to feel the need to struggle for change.

I hope this film, and the disgraceful attack of Sawtell, stimulates readers of Workers Press to study and think about the history of the Spanish Civil War, its Socialist potential, its betrayal and the lessons which Trotsky drew from it.



Blanca (Rosana Pastor) and David (Ian Hart): the main characters in Ken Loach and Jim Allen's latest film, 'Land and Freedom'

's day

and the story-telling, singing and dancing of Australian actor Ningali Lawford. Her show *Ningali* exudes talent and charm, but the sense of Aboriginal anger I expected is almost lost behind a sometimes over-endearing statement of the benefits of cultural and linguistic identity.

Interestingly it is from England again that the cutting edge of the Traverse offensive comes. The best-aimed of its opening shots (apart from the established *Bondagers*) was Thirteen Treasures Theatre in Paul McNeilly's *Not Gods but Giants*. A drama partly in verse, it is as though T.S. Eliot were collaborating with John Osborne to reflect the anger in the wasteland of a suburban estate 'somewhere in Major's England'.

The beer here is cheap lager, from a fridge it's been a struggle to pay for: it isn't warm and flat and there's no village cricket. And, as someone points out, to call the violence at the centre of the story 'domestic' is an abuse of the English language. Yet it's the English language which triumphs in this intelligent play: without deleting the ever-intrusive Anglo-Saxon expletives, McNeilly allows the 'forgotten' working class to make the resources of the language its own, and speak about its crisis.

The play deserves a better resourced production but director Paul Ryan sustains it pretty well by getting fine performances from the company, particularly Karen Henthorn as the abused and neurotic Shirley Ryan.



The POUM militia unit that included George Orwell about to leave Lenin barracks in Barcelona for the Aragon front

Prepare now for fight against Labour government

BY GEOFF PILLING

THOSE who thought that Blair's victory in the fight to get rid of Clause Four was the end of the matter in the Labour Party have had a rude shock.

The criticisms now raining in on Blair and the small group that surround him in the Party leadership are a pale reflection of the conflict that is building up between the working class and this leadership.

The attack on Blair by such pillars of the trade union establishment as GMB leader John Edmonds and transport union leader Bill Morris are a sign of the great pressure that such leaders are under.

In an article in the newspaper 'Tribune', Edmonds blasted Blair for pressing ahead too rapidly with his 'modernization plans' and for praising the former Tory party leader Baroness Thatcher.

Similarly with Roy Hattersley, a stalwart of the right wing leadership of the 'old' Labour Party. In an article in the 'Independent', former deputy leader of the party Hattersley warned that he shared the concerns of many party members that the situation of the 'disadvantaged and dispossessed' was being ignored by the Blair leadership.

That this comes from a man who is an avowed opponent of Clause Four and one who wishes to see the formal link between the unions and the Labour Party severed only makes his attack more significant.

As an old Fabian, Hattersley is worried that if the 'disadvantaged and dispossessed' abandon the Labour Party then the prospect of severe political instability in this country draws that much closer.

Hattersley and his kind know that in the past the Labour leaders have kept the working class in place by being able to hold out the prospect of some slight reforms and improvements to the conditions of the working class.

Plight

But however much Hattersley wishes to go back to 'old Labour' there is in fact no going back. The plight of British capitalism makes it impossible for the ruling class to make any concessions to the working class. On the contrary, they are driven to take back from the working class all the past concessions that have

Prepare now for fight against Labour government



Blair and Prescott represent capitalism's need to take back past gains of the working class

been made. It is this need that Blair, Prescott and the rest of the leaders of 'new Labour' represent. If they form a government, alone or with others in a coalition, they will carry out a systematic and quite brutal attack on the living standards, welfare benefits, and rights of millions of working-class people.

Here the example of Labour-controlled Reading council is instructive. This council has set up a special 'hot line' which people can phone to report on neighbors who they suspect of drawing social security and other benefits to which they are not entitled.

This 'snoopers' charter' has been enthusiastically adopted by Frank Dobson and the rest of the Shadow Cabinet. This will be the policy of the next Labour government.

In similar fashion they back the most vicious attacks on local councils such as Lambeth, even though such attacks are backed by not a shred of hard evidence (see page 3).

Why? Because this leadership

is preparing to stamp out any possible opposition to the draconian measures it will introduce against millions of working-class families should it win the next election.

Warning

Here is a warning of what to expect under a government led by Blair and his friends. It will use the full might of the state to attack the poorest and most disadvantaged. It will allow nothing to stand in its way.

When the Tories make quite unfounded criticisms of a Labour council, such as in Walsall, what does the Labour leadership do. Like circus dogs, jumping to the instructions of the master, they immediately suspend the local Labour Party concerned.

When a local party adopts a candidate as prospective MP, as in the case of Liz Davies in north-east Leeds and it is later revealed that in the past she has committed the 'crime' of refusing to pay the poll tax, she is immediately subjected to investigation by

Labour Party headquarters in Walworth Road.

What is to be done? The preparations for the inevitable clash between the working class and the next Labour government must be made now. There can be no talk of waiting for such a Labour government and 'giving it a chance'. Nor of simply demanding that the Labour Party adopts socialist policies.

The fight must be to unite all the struggles in which the working class is now involved and out of these struggles to create a movement that can confront and defeat the plans of any future Labour government.

What this developing crisis in the Labour Party reveals is that the conditions for the formation of a new party that can really reflect the needs and interests of the working class are maturing rapidly.

An urgent discussion about the aims and programme of such a party must now be organised throughout the Labour movement.

City Lights

Sold for a song

The late former Tory Prime Minister Harold Macmillan once condemned the Thatcher government for 'selling off the family silver' as a means of trying to straighten out the government's finances. Macmillan was in particular attacking the sale of the former nationalised industries.

But Macmillan actually got it wrong. For the nationalised industries have not been sold off — they have been virtually given away. This is certainly the case with the former state-owned electricity companies, as recent figures have clearly exposed.

In November 1990, the government and its advisors agreed to sell the 12 regional electricity companies, or RECs, for a total of £5.2 billion, or at 240p a share. The biggest of the RECs, Eastern, would fetch £684 million.

The total proceeds from electricity privatisation would be enough to slice 3p off the standard rate of income tax, boasted the then secretary of state for energy John Wakeham, now Lord Wakeham. Prime Minister John Major hailed this as the most successful privatisation, as shares in the electricity companies went on sale and were over-subscribed ten-fold.

The 240p price was fixed on the basis of advice received by the government from a 50-strong assortment of merchant bankers, financial institutions, PR men and the like. For this advice the government forked out a handsome £50 million of taxpayers' money.

But putting it mildly it was duff, if expensive, advice. Two weeks ago, the notorious asset-stripper and take-over specialist Lord Hanson, not known for paying a penny more for anything than he needs, offered £2.5 billion for Eastern alone — almost four times what the Exchequer received for it.

At the end of last week the 12 privatised companies were valued on the stock exchange at almost £17 billion — more than three times their original sale price of £5.2 billion.

The 'missing' £11 billion-plus could pay for 275 hospitals or nearly 1,400 secondary schools.

The latest round of bids and rumours of bids for the RECs underlines the extent of the daylight robbery that this particular privatisation involved.

■ Today, Scottish Power is offering more than £900 million for Manweb, the REC serving Merseyside the North Wales. In 1990 the government got £285 million for it.

■ The REC covering the South West was sold in 1990 for £295 million. It is now the object of a take-over bid from the US which is in excess of £1 billion.

How come the industry was sold for next to nothing? Whatever the answer, the role of NM Rothschild was a central one. It was this merchant bank, which for two centuries and more has been at the heart of the Square Mile, that advised all the 12 RECs in the run-up to privatisation.

Not only that. It had and has still the closest links with the government. Both former Chancellor Norman Lamont as well as leadership contender John Redwood were ex-Rothschild men and after he left the government Wakeham, now Lord Wakeham, joined the board as non-executive director.

Advised by Rothschild, each REC managed in its pre-privatisation prospectus to seriously

over-estimate its future costs as well as to grossly under-estimate the savings that could be made from greater 'efficiency' — that is from sackings and redundancies. It also made projections for future investment which have not been met. In all these ways the value of the pre-privatised industry was seriously underestimated.

It was on the basis of these Rothschild-backed estimates that the government decided to treat the electricity companies with the utmost generosity. They agreed to wipe off considerable debts as well as to institute a pricing regime that was lax in the extreme, which initially allowed the newly privatised firms to raise their prices at least in line with inflation.

It is further rumoured that on the eve of privatisation Rothschild went to the Bank of England and warned it that City underwriters — large institutions that for a fee agree to step in to buy a share issue if the shares are not taken up elsewhere — might not take on the issue. This was one of the excuses that the government undoubtedly used in setting the share prices at a more than bargain level. In fact, as we have noted, the share issue was ten times over-subscribed.

If all this is not bad enough we have the remuneration of the REC's bosses. They were able to buy shares at prices that have since soared beyond perhaps even their expectations.

The late Lord Thomson admitted that the arrival of commercial television was a licence to print money. Perhaps even he would have been somewhat surprised at the possibilities opened up by electricity privatisation.

In short the privatisation of electricity was one of the financial scandals of our time. It is surpassed only by the scandal of the refusal of the Labour leaders to take the industry back into public ownership.

Fat fees for fat cats

AUDITORS are another group of people doing very nicely thank-you out of privatisation — this time from the establishment of the 'internal market' in the NHS.

In return for checking on fraud and corruption and checking that money for patients is put to proper use, they last year received almost £40 million — a jump of 128 per cent from the previous year's figure of £18 million. According to Labour MP Alan Milburn, much of the fees arise from the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering.

Milburn said last week: 'The accountants are taking over the NHS. By creating competing trusts within the health care market the government has sent administrative costs soaring in the NHS. Of course public money in the health service should be properly held to account but this boom in auditors' fees is now diverting precious resources from the sharp end of patient care.'

But our auditor friends can sleep soundly. For the leaders of Milburn's party have made clear that the great majority of the 'reforms' in the NHS introduced by the Tories will stay put should Blair and his friends form a government.

Threadneedle

Labour's crisis shows need for new socialist party

BY RICHARD SIMON

ONE HUNDRED years' ago, when trade unions were beginning to grow, they quickly realised that their industrial gains were being removed by the political actions of the employers' representatives in parliament — the Tory and Liberal parties.

In a major endeavour to defend the interests of the organised working class, the trade unions founded the Labour Party.

The belief prevailed within the party that it was possible to move towards socialism via a series of reforms.

However unrealistic and unrealisable that now appears, it has to be acknowledged that five generations of workers have, in varying degrees, given their support to the Labour Party.

Blair and his kitchen cabinet — 'the creche' — have ensured that not only have all pretensions to socialism been removed from the Labour Party, but it can now be truly described as a pro-capitalist party, which merely seeks to be a better apologist for capitalism than either the Tories or Liberal Democrats.

Blair's style of managing the

Labour Party is now a source of major concern amongst MPs, trade union general secretaries and ordinary members of the party.

A range of MPs — Dennis Canavan, Richard Burden, George Galloway, Mike Watson and Roy Hattersley — have all publicly criticised management and policy-making in the party.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB general union, and the Transport and General Workers' Union's Bill Morris, have also been publicly critical of Blair.

Criticisms have centred on Blair's praise for Baroness Thatcher, his addressing Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation in Australia, for opposing a national minimum wage and for making Labour members within the unions feel 'bloody miserable'.

Where does all this leave deputy leader John Prescott?

Many in the Labour Party left supported John Prescott for deputy leader because they nurtured the hope that he would be an effective counterbalance to Blair. Those hopes were sadly misplaced.

Addressing a meeting of Labour Party members he was

asked how he saw his role as deputy and its relationship to the leader. Prescott replied that his relationship to Blair was analogous to that of a railway guard to the engine driver. His job as guard was to walk amongst the passengers assuring them that they were safe in the hands of the driver.

Not only is this unprincipled but, in the light of the recent report on rail safety, it is positively dangerous!

Have the 'passengers' allowed themselves to be calmed by Prescott's repeated assurances about Blair?

Figures

Apparently not — the Labour Party's latest recruitment figures show that while it has gained 113,000 new members since Blair was elected, it has also lost 38,000 over the same period.

Evidently, many of those who have left the Labour Party are socialists who are disillusioned by a party whose policies are almost indistinguishable from those of the Tories, whose leader is the willing tool of big business and who has already prepared the ground for a major betrayal of

working-class interests if Labour forms the next government.

The need for trade unionists to have a fighting, international party committed to struggle for the replacement of capitalism by socialism is more urgent today than it was in the period leading to the foundation of the Labour Party.

Nation states have, for the most part, lost control over economic decisions to the extent they ever had any.

Capital is able to move freely across frontiers and impose very severe restraints on the policies of most nation states.

Because of this, it is essential that the new party — proposed in the WRP's last congress resolution — regards itself as the British section of an international working-class movement.

The terminal decline of capitalism in Britain, the fundamental changes to the character and conduct of the Labour Party and the objective needs of the working class, all demand, as an urgent imperative, that socialists inside and outside that party discuss and move in a comradely and non-sectarian fashion towards the founding of a new, socialist party.

Bosnian ambassador rejects US carve-up

BOSNIA'S ambassador in London, Muhammed Filipovic, last week firmly rejected proposals to hand over eastern Bosnia to the Serb nationalists, saying it was 'a new attempt to reward Serb war crimes, disguised as a "peace plan".'

'Not one single politician in Bosnia could advocate such a plan,' said ambassador Filipovic, fresh from a recall for government consultations, during which he visited Bosnia and Herzegovina troops at the front. 'We are not going to trade in our country. This "new" American plan will have the fate of all previous plans — no chance at all.'

Bosnian forces gained ground around the Serb-held town of Donje Vakuf in central Bosnia last week, in a thrust that could clear the road from the coast to Travnik, and open an advance to regain Jajce, Bosnia's historic capital and a vital strategic crossroads. South east of Sarajevo, Bosnian forces operating 'behind Serb lines' in the Treskavica mountains were preparing to fight their way back to Foca and Gorazde.

President Alija Izetbegovic promised the siege of Sarajevo would be broken by November. Croat forces in Dubrovnik responded to renewed shelling of the town by attacking Serb-nationalist positions over the border.

The Serbian government temporarily slammed its door on Serbs from the Krajina, and sent some 500 soldiers and officers back to the war front.

Evicted

In the Banja Luka area of north Bosnia, once home to half a million Bosnian Muslims and Croats, remaining non-Serbs were being evicted from their homes by Serb forces, and men under 45 taken away, either to dig trenches or worse.

There were reports of elderly Croats being tortured by Serb Chetniks, and of Hungarians being evicted in Vojvodina.

Serb authorities said they wanted to settle 16,000 people in the Kosovo area, where the majority of the population remain

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

ethnic Albanians smarting under Serbian rule. But Aleksa Jokic of the Serbian refugee committee said all men of military age would be sent to fight in Bosnia.

The biggest threat to Bosnia came from the great powers. Only days after UN reports confirming evidence of Serb genocide in eastern Bosnia, including US air photographs showing mass graves, President Clinton vetoed the US senate's vote to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnians.

Adviser

Clinton's national security adviser Anthony Lake set off on a round of talks with British, French, German and Spanish officials, most importantly meeting Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

The US official's trip followed Serbian President Milosevic's talks with Boris Yeltsin. Croatia's President Tudjman had declined to join them because Bosnia's Alija Izetbegovic hadn't been invited.

Clinton wants an international summit meeting, and is proposing to reward the Serb war criminals for genocide by letting them keep Zepa and Srebrenica, and add Gorazde to their spoils.

This is essentially the same proposal aired by France's Alain Juppé after he and British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd had talks with Serbian President Milosevic last Autumn. According to some reports Tuzla was also offered to the Serbs then.

Tudjman would be offered parts of western Bosnia, currently under Croat HVO militia control. Bosnia's Muslims might be allowed to keep a central area, with Sarajevo, as a sort of mini-state, Bantustan or reservation, possibly policed by US troops.

Following Owen, Vance,



Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic promises siege of Sarajevo to be broken by November

Stoltenberg, Carl Bildt and company, Clinton and his officials are out to carve up Bosnia and Herzegovina, ending the last vestige of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural democracy in former Yugoslavia, and treating people in this part of Europe as colonial subjects.

As Tory Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was despatched to sell the 'new' US plan to the Saudis and other Islamic states, which had declared the arms embargo null and void, the Bosnian and Croatian ambassadors in London held a joint press conference, rejecting media speculation about a rift.

'Serb propaganda is doing anything it can to drive a wedge between Croats and Muslims,' the Croatian ambassador said. 'It happened before and we had a

disastrous conflict in Bosnia, but we have learnt the lesson.'

In 1993, acting on a secret deal with Milosevic, and discreet encouragement by Lord Owen, Tudjman entered the fray against Bosnia, behind the Croat-nationalist Boban.

Rumours

There were rumours earlier this year of secret contacts with Milosevic. Some British media commentators have suggested Croatia's victory in Krajina could renew designs on Bosnia. But Tudjman's decision not to go to Moscow without Izetbegovic, suggests the Croatian leader cannot do just as he pleases.

Croatia is not yet a fascist dictatorship. It has independent

trade unions, and opposition papers that, despite government harassment, could teach the media here about speaking out.

Retaking Krajina, which constituted a hostile base on Croatian soil, has roused people to want to regain eastern Slavonia, too. But apart from fascist Ustashe, and corrupt HVO militia in Herzegovina, most ordinary Croats have no animosity for Bosnian Muslims, and don't want an alliance with Milosevic's Serbs.

Labour shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook's call for sanctions against the Croats to stop them retaking eastern Slavonia can only help the Tory government's machinations with Belgrade.

Pointing out that towns like Foca, Gorazde and Vornik had al-

ways had a Muslim majority, Bosnian ambassador Muhammed Filipovic said no one was entitled to say they should be given to Serbia, or negotiate away the destiny of 400,000 people.

As to whether Bosnia feared a sudden Serb attack if the arms embargo was lifted, ambassador Filipovic, a former partisan and, until he took up his diplomatic duties, a university philosophy lecturer, said: 'We have already defended ourselves for three and a half years, with no heavy artillery, and without tanks or aircraft.'

Professor Filipovic said he had just been up in the hills with the Bosnian soldiers, and they were winning.

'Karadzic cannot raise enough soldiers or support, and if they try to send in conscripts there will be riots in Serbia,' he predicted. 'No one wants to come and be killed, they have no motive.'

Support

The Bosnian government didn't just have support from 300,000 Serbs on the territory it controlled, who were represented in the Serb civic forum. 'We have contact with people in Banja Luka, and Byelina, who are concerned for their Serbian people, and where Karadzic is leading them.

'Many are already in prison in Banja Luka and such places, and Karadzic is introducing martial law, and executing people.'

Professor Filipovic said the United Nations Protection Force had failed to protect Bosnians, or aid convoys. 'They did not defend the "safe areas". They did not even defend themselves. Their mission had ended before it began.'

As for humanitarian aid, 'it came from the nations, from the people, not from Mr Boutros-Boutros Ghali. Mr Boutros-Boutros Ghali used humanitarian aid as blackmail, always threatening to stop deliveries if we were not going to concede such and such.' UN officials had boasted of putting Bosnians under a dilemma — to either starve or give up weapons — he said. If there were to be an international war crimes tribunal, Boutros-Ghali and others would have to come before it too.

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'Serbs welcome back to homes'

SERBS who fled the Krajina area of Croatia in the path of Croatian forces are welcome to return to their homes, according to the Croat ambassador in London.

'There was no reason for mass departure,' he told reporters, accusing Serb-nationalist commanders of ordering evacuation of the area in order to apply pressure on Serbian President Milosevic for military intervention.

The ambassador said President Tudjman had offered an amnesty 'to all Croatian citizens of Serb nationality', except for

those who had committed war crimes. He believed many would not like what faced them in Serbia: 'They are returning, as many have already done in western Slavonia.'

Asked about Croat crowds attacking Serb refugees, the ambassador said this had happened in one town, Sisak, on a day when feelings were running high because 12 of the citizens had been buried, killed by Serb shelling. He wasn't excusing what happened, he said, but it had not been orchestrated.

The Bosnians' war against fascism

Bosnia's war is a 'defence of democracy against Serbian fascism', Bosnian ambassador Muhammed Filipovic said. 'Our only regret is that some of the people whom we thought stood for freedom and democracy have let us down.'

Answering a question about his people's identity, and why Croats and Serbs were identified by ethnicity, and Muslims by religion, ambassador Filipovic replied:

'We are Bosnians. But we are getting killed because we are

Muslims. On the Serb side it is an old tradition, killing Muslims....

'Only, the thing with genocide is, when you start you cannot stop. They cannot limit it to Muslims. They are starting on Catholics, destroying churches because they have finished the mosques. This wish to destroy anybody who is different is fascism....

'We offer the Serb people equal rights with Croats and Muslims. We consider ourselves all Bosnians.'