

GORBACHEV'S TRAP SNAPS SHUT ON THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION

BY CYRIL SMITH

LAST WEEK, the global deal struck at the Gorbachev-Reagan Summit unfolded a little further. The Moscow leader, true to the Stalinist tradition of "peaceful co-existence", has undertaken to force the leaders of anti-imperialist struggles to compromise with their enemies. The deal centres on Palestine and South-West Africa.

The talks between the Cubans, the Angolans and the representatives of Apartheid have now borne poisonous fruit.

Cuban forces helped to defeat Portuguese imperialism in 1976. Now they are to be pulled out of Angola. In return, South African troops who are brutally occupying Namibia will withdraw - or so Pretoria says.

Not only will Angola and Mozambique be left at the mercy of South Africa, but the racist state will be strengthened in the face of the upsurge of the South African masses.

Not surprisingly, the Soviet government, which up to now has pretended that it was not involved in the negotiations, has expressed its pleasure at this deal. In fact, of course, the Cubans have been acting as the representatives of Stalinism all along.

At the same time, evidence has emerged of an even sharper lurch to the right on the part of the Stalinists operating within the African National Congress. A new document they are circulating is reported to have been cleansed of even the faint smell of socialism carried by the ANC's Freedom Charter.

In the Middle East, however, the Kremlin operates more indirectly. When King Hussein suddenly announced that he was washing his hands of the West Bank, he accelerated a process of compromise which was already in process.

Last week, in a statement from the West Bank, the Palestinian leadership there indicated that it was considering the setting up of a Palestinian government-in-exile. This, they said, was to counter the pressure from extreme right-wing forces in Israel for Zionist annexation of the West Bank.

But the implications are quite different. Contained in the Palestinian proposal is the move towards recognition of the Zionist State and the acceptance of the West Bank instead of the homeland for which the Palestinians have struggled so heroically. The resumption of Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations is already well prepared.

In the 1960s, the Palestine Liberation Organisation firmly established itself as the leadership of the struggle against Zionism and its imperialist masters. With incredible determination and considerable skill, Yasser Arafat has led the movement and held it

together under the most fantastic difficulties, but his policies and methods were those of bourgeois nationalism, of however radical a variety.

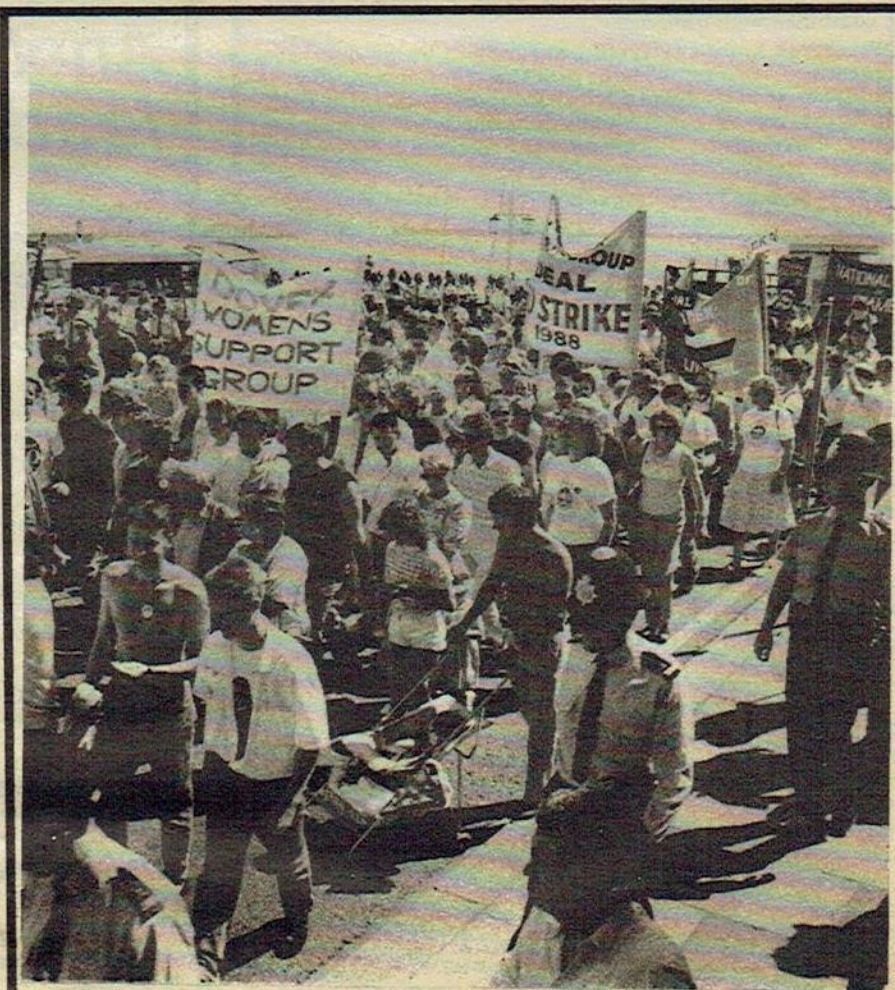
The limitations of those methods have now been reached. For Arafat's conception of the way to defeat Zionism always implied manoeuvring to maintain support from the Arab rulers and from Stalinism, either in its Moscow or Peking form.

Those groups in the PLO who stand to the left of Fatah are really only variants of the same basic type. Their relationship to Stalinism is in some cases even closer.

It has always been the duty of Marxists to support every struggle for national independence against imperialism without condition, and it will remain so. But that in no way means refraining from criticising the policies followed by the leaderships of such movements. On the contrary, we have a responsibility to warn them against the dangers they face.

For many years, the International Committee of the Fourth International abdicated this responsibility. It backed every turn of the policies of the PLO, not to mention far more

• continued on back page



Part of the large contingent of trades unionists and others who marched in Dover in support of the courageous stand of the Seafarers against the company which puts profit before people's lives. • Turn to back page for a report on the rally.

Workers Press

Natural allies

IN 1922, David Lloyd George, that astute and ruthless leader of imperialism, threatened 'immediate and terrible war' if the Treaty partitioning Ireland was not signed.

The threat was combined with diplomacy. Constitutional nationalist Arthur Griffith convinced Michael Collins, fearless militarist par excellence, that the Treaty was the best stepping-stone in pursuit of the Irish Republic: they signed.

Thus the right-wing Irish bourgeois leaders abandoned the struggle for national self-determination. The 'left' bourgeois Eamonn de Valera held out a bit longer before accepting partition along with them. This served their class interests. Throughout the present 'troubles', the Irish bourgeoisie has collaborated with British imperialism's murderous six-county regime, with only a few whimpers of protest.

British labour leaders not only support it, but have helped organise it. All of them agreed with Prime Minister Thatcher when she said in Australia: 'Wipe the IRA off the civilised world'. Encouraged by such blood-lust, Belfast Loyalists drove into the besieged nationalist ghetto of Ardoyne, and sprayed bullets into a crowd of shoppers, killing a teenager, and gunned down a lorry driver who tried to block their getaway.

Meanwhile, Unionist politicians demand selective internment of Republican leaders, and the SAS Gibraltar murderers are lauded as heroes in the press. Many things have changed since 1922 but today, again, imperialist threats are combined with diplomacy.

With one hand the Irish bourgeoisie helps organise increased British repression; with the other, it tries to pull republican leaders down a 'constitutional' nationalist road. This is the meaning of the talks between Social Democratic Labour Party leader John Hume and Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein.

Adams says he is seeking a 'pan-nationalist' alliance with the SDLP and Fianna Fail, the party led by 26-county premier Charles Haughey.

But what could such an alliance be, except a means of giving Haughey a 'nationalist' face, while the repression goes on? We are not, in principle, against temporary alliances with sections of the Irish bourgeoisie. But the alliance now proposed - an alliance of words, while republican prisoners sit in Portlaoise threatened with extradition - is dangerous to the Irish working class, above all the nationalist communities under Thatcher's jackboot.

In this age of multi-national companies, multi-national unemployment, 'international counter-terrorism' - all of which will be strengthened as integrated Europe approaches in 1992 - the alliance that is needed is not pan-nationalist, but internationalist. The natural allies of the Irish working class are the workers of Britain and Europe. In 1916 James Connolly aimed, unsuccessfully, to strengthen that alliance by armed uprising; today, that alliance is still potential unrealised.

This is what makes the 'official' British Labour movement's blood-stained record on Ireland doubly criminal. Without its slavish co-operation, Thatcher could not wield the iron fist; without it keeping British workers 'neutral', the Irish working class would not be deprived of its potentially most valuable support.

- We need international working class mobilisation for British withdrawal: action by trades unions, Labour parties, and working class communities.

- We must defend those fighting imperialism, including the IRA. This means, among other things, an unremitting campaign in defence of all Irish political prisoners.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £4421.15

On Saturday 6 August over 200 people gathered in the Lambeth Town Hall Social Club to be with Norman and Pauline Harding who were married in Leeds on 5 August. And there were hundreds of greetings from those who could not be there.

Norman, formerly a Leeds clothing worker, became a Trotskyist in 1954. When, some years later, he moved to London he became a printworker and driver for the Party. He was 'on call' 24 hours a day.

There was not a single person present on Saturday who did not have a story about Norman - the struggles against the right wing in the Labour Party; the recruitment of Communist Party members after the 1956 Khrushchev speech and the Hungarian Revolution; the tenants' struggles; the daily paper; being picked up at the airport; rushing to produce vital leaflets or documents; the organisation of transport for marches, demonstrations, rallies and camps; driving lessons; a cup of tea (bottle of perrier water), or a shoulder to lean on in times of stress. Norman stood at the centre of a hive of Party activity.

When the time came in 1985 to expel G. Healy and his clique, Norman did not hesitate. He was prepared to 'stand up and be counted' in his Party.

What, you might ask, has all this to do with the Workers Press Fighting Fund?

The tremendous spontaneous warmth of the response from so many comrades and friends to Norman's marriage to Pauline is another glimpse of the support there is for this Party and its principles. Why do I say that? Because (and Norman is the first to agree) he is not an individual - he cannot be separated from this Party.

It is in this spirit that I ask you all to go out confidently to collect donations for the Workers Press Fighting Fund. We can reach our target of £10,000 by the end of September. Be bold!

Dot Gibson

Send to: Workers Press Fighting Fund, PO Box 735, London, SW9 7QS

Another mouth to feed...

AMIDST heavy betting at leading bookmakers, and 120-point headlines in the gutter press ('Fergie-mania has reached fever pitch' - the Sun), another 'royal bloodsucker' came into the world on 8.8.88 (Lucky for some!).

Anxious yuppies stand with bated breath. Will the young couple be able to afford this child? They need not worry - on investigation Workers Press found them to be 'OK for a couple of bob'.

The Duke of York's income from the state increased from £20,000 per annum to £50,000 when he married 'Fergie' and, in the recent budget, this went up to £86,500. (To save you doing the arithmetic - this is £1,663.50 per week. An old age pensioner gets £32.50, an unemployed person gets £34.50)

But let's take a look at the overall picture (The Prince of Wales is provided for by the Duchy of Cornwall):

Queen:	£4,500,000
Queen Mother:	£390,000
Duke of Edinburgh:	£217,700
Duke of York:	£86,500
Prince Edward:	£20,000
Princess Royal (Anne):	£135,600
Princess Margaret:	£132,100
Duke of Gloucester:	£106,300
Duke of Kent:	£143,500
Princess Alexandra:	£136,800

GRAND TOTAL: £5,868,500

The Duchess was giving birth - at least 90 photographers were waiting for a glimpse of the royals. . . meanwhile at the World Conference on Medical Education up the road in Edinburgh, Dr. James Grant, director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was reporting that more than 3.5 million children died last year because they 'didn't have 50 cents of vaccine in their veins'.

In other words just £1,166,666 would have saved those 3.5 million children - that is one fifth of the money paid to ten royals in one year.

Need we say more?

How to fight the poll tax

BY SIMON PIRANI

THE POLL TAX has brought into existence community-based political organisations outside the control of the labour and trade union bureaucracy. During the miners' strike, similar organisations appeared: women's committees and support groups organised by trade union and political activists in non-mining areas.

The trade union leaders were able to betray the miners, by isolating them from other workers and blocking solidarity actions. But the poll tax directly affects every working class family, and the community-based organisations formed have embraced a much wider section of the working class than the miners' support groups did.

In Glasgow alone, 40-odd groups have been formed. Public meetings and leafletting campaigns have been organised on every housing scheme. The group to which I belong staged the first political demonstration ever to have taken place in the locality; in an area with a large Asian population we succeeded in uniting Asians and whites like never before.

Powerful

The labour and trade union bureaucracy has reacted to this movement like a powerful weed among flowers - getting a grip of the movement, trying to bend it to suit its own purpose, and if it can, choke it to death.

When the poll tax first became an issue last October, a group of labour and trade union bureaucrats set up the 'Stop It' campaign headed by Labour MP Brian Wilson and Charles Gray, leader of Strathclyde Regional Council. Without the co-operation of the Strathclyde Labour group - regularly elected with huge majorities, because their constituencies are solidly working class - the poll tax simply could not operate in Strathclyde.

Last December a resolution not to co-operate with the poll tax was voted down by three-to-one in the Labour group. The Labour group approved council minutes recording over £2 million administrative expenditure on the tax: a resolution to query these minutes - which would at least have delayed their implementation - was voted down by 30 to 19. And that was after legal advice had been taken, that even under the poll tax registrar's draconian powers, it would not have been illegal.

The Stop It campaign, at first, condemned those who talked about breaking the poll tax law. This was a foolish and 'Trotskyist' position, Wilson told the Glasgow 'Evening Times'. At the Scottish TUC's April congress, right-wing unions wanted a resolution specifically rejecting a non-payment tactic, but under left-wing pressure a compromise resolution was agreed: that the tax be fought by 'any and every' means.

Ready

Sensing that sections of the working class are ready to defy the tax, STUC leader Campbell Christie has talked about non-payment, most openly at the miners' gala in June.

Where action rather than rhetoric is called for, the trade union leaders' position is clear. At the conference of the local government union NALGO a resolution from Yorkshire and Humberside, urging council workers not to implement the tax, was defeated.

As for industrial action, the STUC are organising a ten-minute stoppage against the poll tax!

On the local level, the trade union bureaucracy has helped to block joint action by trades unionists and community-based groups.

In Glasgow, the Trades Council - dominated by the Euro-communists - convened a meeting in January, supposedly to initiate a Stop It

campaign. It scheduled a further meeting two months later! A demand from the EIS teachers' union Glasgow branch for a conference where the policies of the local Stop It branch would be decided democratically fell from the Trades Council agenda without a seconder. Glasgow Stop It, eschewed by the most active community-based groups, remains an inactive shell.

Faced with this manoeuvring, community groups in Strathclyde organised their own 'Anti-Poll Tax Conference' on 13 July. Over 100 organisations attended - not only anti-poll tax groups but civil service, council, teaching, fire brigade and other unions, tenants' associations, Community Councils and political groups. The STUC executive turned down an invitation to send a speaker; they backed a lifeless Stop It meeting, about one-quarter the size of the anti-poll tax conference, the previous Saturday.

The conference was dominated by the pseudo-Trotskyist 'Militant' tendency, who hoped to use it to boost their credentials as a 'left' opposition to Kinnoch.

There was revulsion - that's not too strong a word - in many community-based groups, at the methods used by 'Militant' to ensure they controlled the anti-poll tax federation set up at the conference.

Firstly, they created a rigid structure which allowed for affiliation by anti-poll tax groups, but not by shop stewards' committees, tenants' associations or Community Councils - thus strengthening the division of trades unions from the community organisations.

The 'Militant' majority at the conference voted down a resolution from Cambuslang and Rutherglen Trades Council for an open structure with monthly policy-making meetings of the federation.

Instead, 'Militant' supporters successfully proposed a committee elected on the basis of one representative per parliamentary constituency - although there were up to a dozen organisations present from some inner Glasgow constituencies, and one or none from other constituencies. This sums up 'Militant's' reformist conservatism - taking one of the freshest spontaneous working class movements to have appeared for years, and trying to box it up according to the British parliamentary constituency system!

Build

'Militant' aims not to build up the working class movement against the bureaucracy, but to use it to strengthen their own 'left' posturing within the bureaucratic structures.

The conference heard bombastic speeches from 'Militant' supporters calling for defiance of the poll tax law - not now at the registration stage, but next April when payment is due in Scotland.

A resolution from the 'Militant'-dominated Pollok Anti-Poll Tax Union pledged support to those refusing to register - but 'recognised the limitations' of such civil disobedience. The same limitations, of course, apply to non-payment. Its attraction to opportunists is that, until next April, it requires nothing but empty speeches.

'The best possible preparation for a campaign of non-payment', stated a resolution from Pollokshields, was a campaign of non-registration such as several groups in south Glasgow are organising. But 'Militant' supporters on the organising committee manoeuvred to prevent discussion on this proposal.

Why were 'Militant' supporters so bitterly hostile to defying the law today instead of tomorrow? Because they sought short-term political gains - but not the responsibility for leading a real fight against the tax. If the forthcoming special Labour Party conference

rejects a nonpayment stance, the 'Militant' may fall into line, effectively leaving those who cannot or will not pay the tax high and dry.

Similarly, 'Militant' supporters at the anti-poll tax conference voted down a call to Strathclyde council not to implement the poll tax: instead they retreated to a position that Labour councils should 'adopt a clear position of non-collection of legal penalties imposed on any worker participating in civil disobedience', and against 'warrant sales or arrestment of wages' during future collection of the tax.

'Militant' stresses that those hostile to the tax should join the Labour Party and, as they say in their pamphlet on the subject, 'turn it into a fighting socialist organisation'.

This has nothing whatsoever to do with Trotskyism. A 'fighting socialist', i.e. revolutionary organisation, will only be built in a merciless struggle against the Labour leadership and the whole bureaucratic structure on which they rest, and only then will those many fighters and socialists in the Labour Party be able to play a part in breaking the hold of that leadership on the working class, driving it out of the working class movement.

They do not actually believe that anyone but the right-wing Labour leadership will ever lead the working class.

At the anti-poll tax conference, the 'Militant' stood united on this with the Socialist Workers Party, whose motion spelled out that the poll tax could only be beaten 'if the Labour Party and STUC led a campaign of non-payment'. SWP members emphasised in their speeches that the bureaucracy 'are the leadership, and we need them to lead'. They specifically excluded the idea that the Anti-Poll Tax federation, or anyone else, could give leadership independent of, or in opposition to, the bureaucracy.

Insistence

This reasoning has led SWP members to an insistence that anti-poll tax groups should not be encouraged, as the success of the fight against the tax depends entirely on whether the Labour leaders take it up or not.

Workers Revolutionary Party members, on the contrary, have been active in the anti-poll tax groups. Genuine forms of working class organisation which arise independently of and in conflict with the bureaucracy must be encouraged, whether within the trades unions or outside of them.

Of course such groups outside the unions must fight for the closest links with organised workers, which can only strengthen the whole movement against the bureaucracy. But we contemptuously reject the 'Militant' idea that the anti-poll tax groups are only useful to add weight to their attempts to become a 'left' opposition in the Labour Party, which is combined with a cynical belief that, unless the bureaucracy is pressured by such an opposition, the working class itself is helpless.

On 17 September the Scottish Labour Party special conference will discuss the poll tax. A non-payment proposal will be made - but in the face of mounting opposition from right-wing unions, there is no certainty it will be passed. We must fight for the biggest possible lobby of that conference, and for the adoption of a non-payment campaign there - but we should build up the non-payment movement anyway, independently of that decision.

In England and Wales, where movements begin to grow against the poll tax, WRP members and Workers Press readers have a responsibility to take part, building up such movements and directing them against the bureaucracy who have enabled Thatcher to impose the poll tax, and every other piece of anti-working class legislation.

SOUTH AFRICA AND FIGHT THE MONSTROUS

BY MICHEL VARGA

It is no exaggeration to say that what is happening today in the USSR is of fundamental importance for the international proletariat and for the whole of humanity. Why and how?

Undoubtedly the South African workers understand better than anyone else that the world situation is ripe for socialist revolution. The communist programme asserted this from World War I, and it was confirmed in practice by the October Revolution of 1917. It was indeed on this basic point that there came about the great break between revolutionaries and reformists, the latter turning into 'labour lieutenants of the bourgeoisie', as Lenin put it.

But if despite this situation proletarian revolutions have failed or been deformed, and several have proved abortive, this is because they have not had a revolutionary leadership like Lenin's and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party and Third International. For in the USSR itself the revolution was distorted by Stalin and the bureaucracy who, basing themselves on the anti-Marxist theory and practice of 'socialism in a single country', robbed the working class of power, caused the workers' state to degenerate, and destroyed the Bolshevik Party politically and physically.

Props

On this basis they then transformed the communist parties of the whole world into props of the bourgeois system, subordinating their policies to the interests of the 'peaceful coexistence' with the world bourgeoisie that is required by the Moscow bureaucracy's 'socialism in a single country'.

Thus was created this contradiction between the objective situation ripe for socialist revolution and a leadership which extols, and seeks, an agreement with the bourgeoisie, with its most 'radical' wing. As Trotsky put it, in the very first sentence of the Fourth International's programme: 'The world political situation as a whole is distinguished above all by the historical crisis of proletarian leadership'.

Contradiction

The South African workers have been experiencing this painful contradiction for a long time. The South African proletariat and youth have shown by their mass movements, by their mobilisation, that they are prepared to bring down not only the detested apartheid regime but the whole bourgeois social system which bred it and cannot live without it.

At the same time, their leadership - the South African CP and the ANC that it inspires - are seeking agreement with the same 'liberal' bourgeoisie which not long ago refused any concessions to the striking miners and treated them just as the Botha

regime does. The masses want revolution, for they know that this is the only way to smash apartheid; the majority political leadership of their movement (PAC, ANC) spreads the illusion that apartheid can be done away with by reforms and, on those grounds, seeks to form an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. It is precisely this class collaboration policy, inspired and guided by the Kremlin, that has betrayed proletarian revolutions and derailed them.

That is why a mass movement leading to political revolution in the USSR - a movement to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy, this new 'labour lieutenant of the bourgeoisie', and restore power to the working class and its soviets - has and will continue to have a direct, immediate, and hugely beneficial effect on the struggle of the entire international proletariat.

In the USSR (the situation is also developing in this direction in the other eastern European countries and in China) the workers' claims for better working and living conditions, and their protests against the bureaucracy's privileges and corrupt practices, have plunged the bureaucracy into an

unprecedented crisis.

One part of this parasitic layer wants to answer the movement with force, with Stalin's old methods of terror, since it fears that the movement, given its head, will result in revolution. Another part wants, on the contrary, to give concessions to the masses, so as to defuse and prevent revolution.

This is the basis of the bureaucracy's crisis, of its division into so-called 'conservatives' and those who want 'reform'.

Reform

Gorbachev's moves express in a distorted way the strength of the Soviet proletariat's pressure, just as the emergence of 'liberals' in the South African bourgeoisie reflects the mass pressure which frightens a part of the bourgeoisie, which would hasten to get rid of Botha at the cost of a few window-dressing 'reforms'.

For, despite appearances, Gorbachev is not expressing the proletariat's interests but those of a bureaucracy forced to come to terms with the movement. And in order to strengthen its power this bureaucracy inten-



RYKOV
Shot



BUKHARIN
Shot



SVERDLOV
Dead



STALIN
Survivor



KOLLONTAI
Missing?



URITSKY
Dead



KRESTINSKY
Shot



SMILGA
Shot



LOMOV
?



SHOMYAN
Dead



BERZIN
?



MURANOV
Disappeared

THE SOVIET UNION

LEGACY OF STALINISM

sifies 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism rather than relying on the workers and their movements.

Instead of a great workers' mobilisation, Gorbachev prefers to strengthen the imperialist system in all countries - in southern Africa, for instance - just as he prefers to restore 'order' in Armenia by using the army against the Armenian people. Likewise he talks about the 'democratisation' of soviets in the USSR solely in order to canalise the huge pressure of the Soviet workers for the rebirth of Lenin's soviets - to canalise it towards another kind of bureaucratic appendage, like Tito's so-called 'workers' councils'.

All the same, the Soviet workers understood immediately how they could turn this situation to account for strengthening their movement.

To this end they took up the slogans launched by the bureaucracy, appropriating these slogans so as to give them a content corresponding to their own aspirations and thus drive forward the whole movement.

So when Gorbachev talks about the 'democratisation' of the soviets, they put

forward the demand 'All power to the soviets!' The weekly Moscow News (no. 28, July 10, 1988) publishes a very interesting interview. (The mere fact that such an interview is published is highly significant!)

Vladimir Ossipov, a small town lorry-driver, tells the journalist: 'I was expecting them to give up their power, the people who couldn't lead us any more, the people who when we asked "Are we going in the right direction?" told us "Your job is to go forward, our job is to know where we're going".... But they didn't give up their power! So I stuck a streamer saying "All power to the soviets!" on the radiator of my lorry and drove round like that.

Circus

'You wouldn't believe what a circus that caused. They tried to scare me. They threatened to take my licence away. "Will you take that streamer off?" I retorted that it was a slogan of Lenin's. They said they were going to send for the police. I said it was only the bourgeoisie who didn't like that slogan! They said in our country the

soviets already have power. Not at all! They haven't got any power. Our deputy is a lawyer. I asked her: "What have you done to solve our problems?" She said: "What can I do? Nobody pays any attention to me...."

'So where is this soviet power? Lenin saw it differently. We elect our deputies and insist that they meet our needs, they or those who are preventing them from acting.

'Otherwise it's not power at all, but appearances and empty words. The responsible people, allegedly those who were the most intelligent, were appointed in our name. But let's elect not those who are more intelligent than us but those who listen to what we have to say. We're fed up with these intelligent people who turn a deaf ear.'

'Be that as it may', the reporter adds, 'Ossipov was forced to take down his slogan. But not for long. The day after Michel Gorbachev's report, Vladimir was back behind the driving-wheel of a lorry that displayed the appeal for all power to the soviets. But this time he had stuck to the wind-screen a document confirming the correctness of his stand: the general secretary's report....'

In this report can be seen both the true feelings of the Soviet workers and the way in which they put forward their demands. In the name of 'perestroika' the whole Armenian people demonstrate and go on strike to assert their national rights, which Gorbachev and the whole bureaucracy deny them.

So it is inevitable that workers struggling for their demands will more and more come up against the refusal of the bureaucracy, including the most 'reformist'.

At the end of this road strewn with more and more such clashes is the political revolution of the working class to overthrow the power of the whole bureaucracy.

Yet it would be not just a mistake but an unforgivable crime to imagine that the Soviet working class could carry this struggle to victory without its revolutionary Marxist party.

Far from it: the fate of its struggle and, therefore, the fate of the huge and perhaps decisive forward step of the world revolution, depends on the Soviet workers building their party in the likeness of Lenin's party, i.e. the party of the Fourth International. This is the decisive stake in the world class struggle, in the USSR as in South Africa.

The Fourth International was broken up by revisionist centrists who surrendered precisely to the Stalinists, especially those of the Gorbachev type.

We who are fighting to rebuild the Fourth International are committed to rebuilding its Soviet section, the token of the political revolution's triumph, as we are committed to rebuilding its section in South Africa.

More and more the workers know, and feel deeply, that the movements of the workers in other countries, and most of all those of the Soviet workers, are of direct concern to them.

All the experiences of their often unsuccessful struggles confirm that the upshot of their own fight, the final outcome of our movement in South Africa, is closely linked with the struggle of the Soviet working class.



Magic thread - or threadbare 'magic'?

REGULAR readers of this column won't need reminding of Margaret Thatcher's long campaign for the return of 'patriotic' history.

Since before she became prime minister, Thatcher has been lamenting the way history is taught in our schools. In her opinion, British history should be above all a chronicle of kings and queens and national heroes and glorious feats of British arms.

The hand of Thatcher and those who share her narrow, stunted, and stunting vision of what our history is all about can be clearly seen in the new exhibition at the Barbican, entitled 'Royal Britain'.

I haven't been to see this exhibition yet, but I'm not sure I need to. By chance I heard a lot about it on the radio last Sunday afternoon, when a woman called Michelle Brown was the guest on a phone-in programme.

The winsome-voiced Ms Brown is the exhibition's main architect, and extremely pleased with both it and herself she sounded. She kept referring to 'we historians', though her own claim to this honourable title apparently rests on her compilation of a number of booklets on the royal family, including one, believe it or not, on royal diet through the ages.

It emerged that 'Royal Britain' is to be a permanent exhibition, designed above all for tourists and thus part of the 'heritage' racket which is faking up a false British

past for the delectation of foreign innocents prepared to pay good money to be stuffed with British 'patriotic' myths.

Those running this racket operate like so many crooked horse-copers tating up a spavined, broken-winded nag. One of the listeners who phoned in on Sunday did ask Ms Brown about Henry VIII's syphilis, but she hurriedly turned the conversation to less revealing aspects of her heroes' and heroines' careers.

Someone else asked about the reputed healing virtues of the royal touch, and Ms Brown insisted that this does work, 'because people believe in it'. If the royal family didn't exist, she added, it would have to be invented (presumably as a back-up to the underfunded National Health Service).

Yes, said the presenter in a reverent voice, here is 'a magical thread that you can trace back and back and back and back'.

Yes, gushed Ms Brown no less reverently, 'they personify the rest of us'. When a royal has a baby, it seems, there's a sense in which all the women in the land are having that baby. The royal family 'sums up our feelings about ourselves'.

The final section of the exhibition, it emerged, is a gigantic computer bank 'packed with information' about the royal family of today. Given the glut of information already available on this subject in the press and on television, one would hardly have thought this necessary; but apparently there are people just dying to question a computer about the less unmentionable royal habits.

You would have to look a long way to find such an unscrupulous gang of brigands,

robbers, land-stealers, slave-traders, murderers, and political in-fighters as the British royal family has been in its day. But these essential aspects of 'Royal Britain' are not featured at the Barbican.

A welcome new journal

THOUGH I can't read Magyar, millions of Hungarians can, and it's a pleasure to welcome a Marxist journal addressed to them in their own language: 'Negyedik Internacionale' ('Fourth International'), the first issue of which has just appeared.

One of the articles is about the campaign for the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy, Pal Maleter, Miklos Gimes, and Jozsef Szilagyi, who were murdered by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1958 - a campaign I wrote about here on 25 June.

I see that 'Negyedik Internacionale' adds to these four names that of Geza Losonczy, a member of Nagy's cabinet whom I met the day before the Soviet tanks returned to Budapest.

A lifelong communist, Losonczy had been jailed by Stalin's Hungarian proconsul Rakosi, and his health had been shattered in prison, where he had suffered a lung haemorrhage; under Khrushchev's proconsul Kadar he lost his life when he went on hunger strike and his jailers carelessly shoved a feeding tube down his windpipe.

Balasz Nagy and his comrades are to be congratulated on the new journal they have launched. Let us hope it is the harbinger of many similar journals in eastern Europe and, above all, in the Soviet Union itself.

TUC CRISIS TUC CRISIS TUC CRISIS

LETTERS:

This letter is part of a series of contributions to the Workers Press, on the EEPTU. It comes from a long standing member of that union, now a teacher. We invite all of our readers to send in their views on the crisis of the trade union movement. Please limit your contributions to 500 words or less.

HAVING been an active member of the ETU for some 17 years before becoming a teacher in 1966, I've been interested in your discussions on the future of the EEPTU.

Some of your members and indeed other workers I've discussed with outside your party, appear to have established a fixed principle which roughly goes like this: in any trade union dominated and controlled by the right-wing the left wing must never leave that union and form an alternative union. Should they do so the effect will merely be to strengthen the right.

Why should this be the case? Of course, as a general rule, the left do not set up 'red trade unions' as the ultra-lefts did in the 1920s.

But we are in a particular situation. There is no inflexible Marxist principle which sets out that the best way to fight the right wing is to stay inside their organisation for all time.

Here are two examples where it was better to split. The CIO developed as a split from the craft-dominated AF of L in the USA and this split strengthened the movement to the left in America in the 1930s.

True, the CIO became bureaucratised,

however this was not the result of the split but other factors.

In this country in 1954 the 'blue union' (Stevedores) began to organise and recruit large numbers of dockers from the 'white' union (TGWU), then dominated by Deakin, one of the most right-wing trade union leaders at the time. To gain recognition for the 'new' blue union there was a strike which lasted for many weeks.

The right-wing trade union bureaucracy inside and outside the TUC were terrified of these developments, as were the leaders of the Labour Party and the Communist Party. The prospect of a powerful docker's union influenced by Trotskyists would have had enormous effects on the whole Labour and Trade Union movement.

By insisting that the employers stood firm (and some showed signs of wishing to settle on terms favourable to the strikers) and by using the Labour Party, TUC and Communist Party to put pressure on the dockers as well as the terrific hardships the men and their families suffered, the TGWU right-wing were able to defeat the strike. Just think how the left, particularly the Trotskyists, would have been strengthened had the strike been successful.

Of course the situation in the EEPTU is different. Nevertheless, if a left-wing group of electricians can establish an alternative electricians' union it will serve as a pole of attraction, and it will weaken the right wing in the TUC who can be forced into a position of recognising such a union. Furthermore it will weaken the drive of the right wing in the engineers union towards amalgamation with the EEPTU - an amalgamation which would

establish an extremely powerful class collaborationist union.

What is the alternative? The left wing must stay in the EEPTU which over the years has been moulded by the right wing in such a way as to prevent any real challenge by the left as succeeding (rule changes, a biennial conference with no power, amalgamations and suspensions of branches, disciplinary rules used ruthlessly, officials who work hand-in-glove with employers against militant shop stewards and so on.) The list is almost endless. Furthermore, if the left remains in the EEPTU as an impotent force, they can look forward to the certainty that fresh attacks of the Thatcher government on the unions will force the EEPTU further to the right with the probability that they will join forces with other right wing unions (inside and outside the TUC) to form an alternative TUC.

Such an alliance will give encouragement to the right wing still remaining in the TUC and of course, to the Tory government and employers. The leadership of those electricians wishing to form another union may be confused and unclear politically.

Clarity will only come to these workers if your members and sympathisers participate patiently with them in each step in a constructive and friendly manner, without ultimatums, condemnation or sectarian responses.

David Finch

TOM OWEN'S column 'As I See it' will be back in two weeks

The sovereignty of caprice

IF YOU know a lot about Francis Picabia, you have probably already made your plans to visit this year's Edinburgh Festival to see the first exhibition of his work in Britain since 1964.

If you know as little about him as I did, think about coming if you can.

From the moment you enter the first room in the Academy - which has been laid out in a much more welcoming and manageable way than usual - you get a sense of excitement and a feeling of history.

True, there are only 92 exhibits (51 more than there were in 1964) but they are complemented by a challengingly intellectual private collection of material relevant to the Dada and Surrealist movements called 'The Magic Mirror'.

And, more to the point, they have an immediate emotional and cerebral impact.

They sing to the soul of the crises of the imperialist epoch: of the triumph of technology at the expense of humanity, or the distortion of classical ideals in the name of a decadent bourgeois rationality, of the debasement of eroticism before the twin gods of Profit and Respectability.

For me (and maybe this is a purely personal reaction) they also call forth a spirit of struggle for the negation of these contradictions. They seem to speak of the need for a true freedom rooted in the collective harnessing of technology; for a social order based on human need, material and spiritual; for a humane sexuality freed from the moral cant of a society which, if he did not exist, would have had to invent Sir William Rees-Mogg.

This is by no means to say that Picabia offers us political guidance. From a wealthy background and influenced by the German idealist philosopher Nietzsche, he was, in the 1930s and early 1940s, sometimes suspected of reactionary political views. His outlook was certainly highly contradictory.

When the novelist Louis Aragon (a recent convert to the Stalinist nonsense of 'socialist realism') and the Surrealist leader Andre Breton joined the French Communist Party in 1927, Picabia declared:

'Socialism has only been invented for mediocrities and imbeciles, do you see Socialism or Communism in love, in art?'

Not, apparently, a progressive thought at the time. But it is a challenging one today for anyone who sees socialism in the party of Ramsay MacDonald and Neil Kinnock, or communism in Stalin's debased soviets which Mikhail Gorbachev is so anxious to revive.

The relationship between art and politics is, in any case, complex and indirect - though real. And it may be - as Katharina Hegewisch's piece in the lavish catalogue seems to imply - that the reviving interest in Picabia today owes something to absurd illusions in the possibility of a new form of 'art for art's sake' in an ideology-free, nuclear disarming, capitalist world.

But there was far more than that sort of dangerously naive claptrap to the artistic movement with which Picabia was associated: post-impressionism, cubism, Dada, surrealism, and a myriad of experiments looking forward to - and giving an insight into the rational basis of - abstract expressionism and Pop Art.

Picabia, 1879-1953. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy as part of the 42nd annual Edinburgh International Festival. Until 4 September.

At Picabia's funeral in 1953, Breton said his work was:

'based on the sovereignty of caprice, on the refusal to follow, entirely based on freedom, even to displeasure. Only a very great aristocrat of the spirit could have dared what you have dared.'

The exhibition will, I think, challenge most visitors to think afresh about some aspect of their own life; perhaps to take a step towards establishing sovereignty over their own spirit - even if pure caprice seems something best left to the aristocrats of art.

It will also provide a tremendous stimulus to a study of some of the most important movements in twentieth century art.

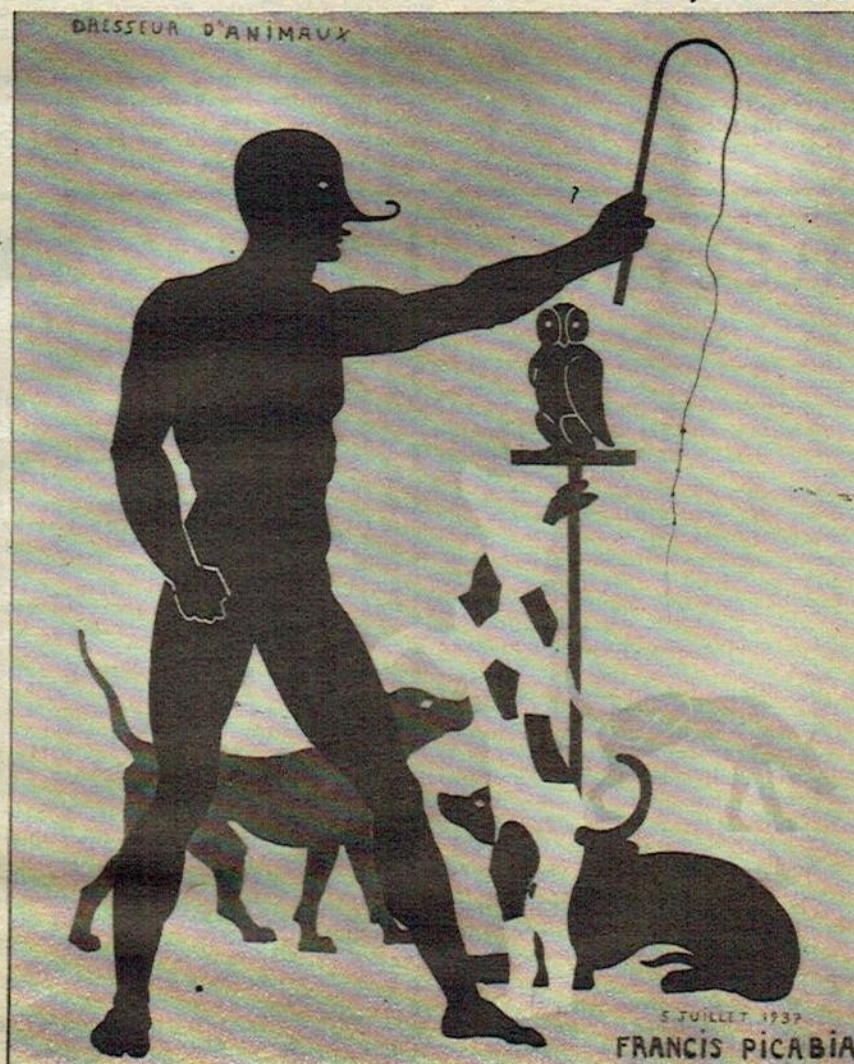
And it is full of wit. For example, there is a marvellous Saint Sebastian (1929),

thoughtfully protecting his private parts from giving offence to the viewing public while the arrows of his executioners pierce him; and wearing a look of ethereal resignation, which, background images suggest, may not be entirely due to the contemplation of the imminent hospitality of the deity.

IF YOU want to come down to earth from the heady atmosphere of the sovereignty of caprice, you can visit the nearby, newly refurbished National Gallery of Scotland, now decked out more or less as it was when first built in the mid-nineteenth century. For the Festival, there is a selection there of the paintings of the Venetian Pietro Longhi (1702-1785), which provides an entertaining insight into the mores of the bourgeoisie of the artist's native city.

AND AT the Portrait Gallery in Queen Street there is a unique collection of the work of the pioneer Scottish photographer, John Muir Wood (1805-1892), which will fascinate devotees of the camera, and maybe others too. The Festival, which lasts until 5 September, is off to a good start.

Terry Brotherstone



Francis Picabia: 'Dresseur d'animaux' (1923)

TUC knife in the back for seafarers?

BY ALAN CLARK

STRIKING P&O seafarer John Woods, speaking at Elm Vale recreation ground after a march from Dover seafarers last Saturday, said:

'This march was not a celebration of the six-months dispute, because it is a sad testament to the trade union movement that after 150 years of trade unionism, from the Tolpuddle martyrs, working class men and women still have to stand up and defend their rights.

'But on the other hand, it is a celebration for the P&O strikers who have had the principle and courage to stand here for six months and put their families under tremendous hardship for that right. The once-moderate NUS at Dover have stood up and shown the trade union movement and the TUC what can be done.

'What's happening here today is not an isolated case. It's happening all over the country,' Woods said.

John Woods' words must have been like a knife in the heart to Sam McCluskie, general secretary of the National Union of Seamen, who was speaking at the rally.

He could only bleat at the end of his pathetic speech: 'If P&O are getting any message from this meeting, tell them we're still here and we're not going away.'

Hardly fighting talk, Woods would have thought.

John Prescott, the deputy leadership candidate in the Labour Party contest and NUS-sponsored MP, explained most

passionately to the meeting the way Thatcher and her government are dealing with striking unions, using the anti-trade union laws, the judiciary and employers in a conspiracy against them, but was unable to say anything about what a Labour government would be doing if they were in power.

Arthur Scargill said: 'Our support for this dispute is part repayment for the seafarers' support for the mineworkers in 1984-85.

'The important thing is, how do you analyse this dispute? Where do we go from here? What happens from now on and how do you succeed in overcoming P&O who are backed by the Tory government? One lesson that our class have got to learn from the Tories is called commitment and loyalty.

'I only wish from the bottom of my boots to the top of my head that the Labour Party and the TUC would show the same loyalty to the strikers at P&O as the Tories show to their class.

'It's time the Labour Party began to re-dedicate itself to socialism, throw away the filofax and join the picket line.'

As John Woods said also in his speech, this dispute has been an eye-opener for him and his colleagues at Dover.

But if anything is to be learned from this dispute, it is that the old leadership has nothing to offer the P&O workers. Their words are so much hot air.

Woods and his colleagues must not be surprised if McCluskie, Prescott, Scargill or the TUC do not commit themselves to bringing down this Tory government.

Only by the building of a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions, committed to smashing this rotten system, can the P&O workers, the nurses and all workers win back the gains won in years of struggle.

News shorts ...

Sick as a parasite

Commiserations are in order for poor Prince Edward, the Queen's youngest son. Owing to the recent arrival of yet another royal mouth, he finds himself demoted to sixth in line of succession to the throne.

Warm start

An explosive welcome greeted US Secretary of State George Shultz on his arrival in Bolivia. On the outskirts of the capital, La Paz, a bomb went off seconds after his armoured limousine had passed by in a 15-vehicle motorcade. It blew a hole in the window of his wife's car but no injuries were reported.

Nursing

A television recruitment drive aimed at young women disregards the warning that more men and older women should be encouraged to take up nursing to combat the expected shortage of female school leavers. The real-life nurses who appear in the commercials do not, as yet, receive the salaries which are quoted in the ads which give a very glamourised version of the profession.

Remarkable

Five Iranian fishermen are said to have been rescued by the US warship, Vincennes. Having been adrift for over a week in a small dinghy, the fishermen should consider themselves lucky they were not blown out of the water, mistaken for an enemy submarine.

Young on drugs

A survey carried out of more than 3,000 pupils at six London comprehensive schools has revealed that one in five schoolchildren between the ages of 11 and 16 had experienced drug abuse.

Marcus the Fox

THE FULL measure of the treachery of the Scottish TUC towards health workers became clear this week as two major health authorities made announcements on privatisation.

Both Grampian and Greater Glasgow Health Boards have decided to award contracts for cleaning services to commercial companies.

In Glasgow this will mean the sack for 650 workers currently employed by the NHS.

The prospect of the introduction of private contractors caused widespread strikes all over Scotland last winter. The action was called off in April by the STUC on the pretext that Scottish Health Minister Michael Forsyth had agreed to talks.

Only one in-house tender has been approved in Glasgow. When challenged on this, Health Board manager Laurence Peterken arrogantly replied 'They will just have to sharpen their pencils for the next round.'

This brought an angry response from NUPE spokesman George Anderson, who pointed out that no NHS tender could compete with outside employers who were using YTS labour for whom they did not have to pay wages.

The Scottish health unions have criticised all three chosen companies - Mediguard, Hospitals Hygiene Services, and Initial Health Care Services - for the poor standards of care they have provided in English hospitals. One of the directors of Hospital Hygiene is right-wing Tory MP Sir Marcus Fox.

PALESTINE

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reactionary tendencies. There was absolutely no conception of building sections of the Fourth International in these countries.

The "Newline", still published by one of the fragments of Healy's organisation still follows this course.

They greeted the most recent moves on the West Bank with their usual rapture, as they would whatever Arafat did.

Neither in Southern Africa nor in the Middle East can imperialism be overthrown by the methods of bourgeois nationalism. Only a party of the working class, now a powerful force in both these regions, can lead the masses to victory.

The programme for these revolutionary struggles must be that of the world socialist revolution. The "theories" of "socialism in one country", of "peaceful co-existence" and of "two-stage revolution" can only lead to defeat and betrayal.

The way forward lies in the establishment of the Socialist United States of the Middle East, and the Socialist United States of Southern Africa.

Only in this form could workers of all national groups at present oppressed by imperialism resolve their economic, social and cultural problems.

The Preparatory Committee, supported by the Workers Revolutionary Party, is fighting to reconstruct the Fourth International, and to build sections in every country to lead the world socialist revolution.

The fight against the treachery of Stalinism is at the heart of this work.

Mayekiso on trial

A WEEK after the trial of Moses Mayekiso resumed and the defence began its submission, the prosecution asked for a two-week adjournment and were, naturally, granted this by the court. This unprecedented move indicates that the apartheid state, which is alleging that Moses and his comrades of the Alexandra Action Committee were conspiring with unspecified foreign forces, is now desperately trying to drag out the trial.

The first defence witness (and defendant) Richard Ndkane, had presented in evidence the minutes of the Alexandra Action Committee meetings in 1985. These conclusively demolish the prosecution's case. The back-peddalling by the state in Mayekiso's trial parallels its delay in completing the passing of the Labour Relations Amendment Bill. They had hoped to deal a knockout blow to the South African trade union movement but were taken aback by the massive three-day stayaway recently organised by workers against the Bill.

30,000 members of Mayekiso's union NUMSA are now on strike in 89 plants in the Transvaal. However, Mayekiso and the trade union movement in South Africa are still in danger. A campaign for the release of Moses Mayekiso and for the defeat of the Bill is now more urgent than ever.