

# Workers Press

Saturday 10 September

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

20p Number 131

## AFTER BOURNEMOUTH

# TWO ROADS FOR THE TRADE UNIONS

THERE were two faces of trade unionism on display last week. On the one hand was the magnificent fight of the postworkers against the Tory government. Despite the wishes of their union leaders, who wanted the usual and futile protest action, they closed down every major sorting office in the country in protest at the Post Office's efforts to break the union through the use of casual labour. This move is itself part of the Thatcher plan for the privatisation of the postal service.

The post strike is a continuation of the miners' strike because the same fundamental issues are at stake: the struggle against the attempts of the state to break up the trade union movement and transform it into a servile instrument of capitalist rule.

The other face of the trade unions was seen in the activities of the trade union bosses assembled at Bournemouth.

The expulsion of the scab EETPU exposed the real face of those who lead the trade union movement. Electricians' leader Eric Hammond called the tune from beginning to end - an end signified by his contemptuous walk-out from the Congress before the hollow vote for the exclusion of his union was taken.

### Political

He alone made a political statement about the future of the trade union movement. He spelt out the fact that he wants trade unions that are completely subservient to the needs of employers and governments alike.

He intends to continue with single union sweet-heart deals which spell the end of effective trade unionism.

But he is not alone. In answer to Hammond, TUC general secretary Norman Willis presented the expulsion issue as though the EETPU had simply broken the 'club rules'. There was not an ounce of

principle in his entire speech.

All the trade union leaders know full well that right up to the last minute Willis and others were working might and main to come to a patch up deal with Hammond which would have allowed his scab union to stay in the TUC.

### Force

A working class that remains anxious to do battle with Thatcher was the only force that prevented Willis from realising his plan.

Even after the expulsion these same leaders will fight at next month's Labour Party Conference to keep Hammond within the Party, just as they have already said they will co-operate with his scab union on joint negotiating committees.

Kinnock spoke in the same manner as Willis. He completely avoided the EETPU issue. He said nothing about the fact that, despite the widespread hatred of the Thatcher government throughout the country, under his leadership Labour is trailing hopelessly in the polls.

### Compulsory

What he did do was to urge complete compliance with the Tory Employment Training Scheme, a preparation for compulsory work for the unemployed.

He was rewarded by the union bosses the next day

when they passed a weasel resolution which will in practice keep the unions tied to the Scheme.

So here were the two faces of trade unionism. The unionism of Hammond, Willis and company is one that will be used as an instrument to discipline and police the working class.


The other face is a union movement that expresses the aspirations of the working class as a whole. The road

towards this sort of movement was pointed to by the postal workers last week.

Its conscious expression requires the building of a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

If you agree with this aim, if you are disgusted by the antics of Willis and Kinnock, we invite you to join the Workers Revolutionary Party in carrying forward this task.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY - WORKERS PRESS



POLITICAL REVOLUTION IN THE EAST  
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN THE WEST

# 50 YEARS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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# A threatening disaster

NEARLY every day now brings fresh disasters from around the world. The Sudan, Bangladesh and, nearer home, the widespread pollution of the North Sea that many hold responsible for the death of thousands of seals and other marine life, are some recent examples.

These disasters are not in essence 'natural' but the product of a decaying social system, capitalism, that is concerned with the wellbeing and development of neither man nor nature but only with the private profit of that handful of financiers and industrialists who control the majority of the planet's resources.

Capital treats nature and the working class in similar fashion. When a worker is no longer a source of actual or potential profit he or she is thrown on the scrap heap or sent to death in war. So a particular natural resource is discarded when another can be exploited for greater profit, whatever the human or material costs.

\* \* \*

In the interests of this drive for profit, large parts of the world - what bourgeois social science likes euphemistically to call the 'underdeveloped countries' - have for decades and decades been plundered and sucked of their wealth for the benefit of the monopolies.

Nothing is sacred in capitalism's search for profit. As the case of the Karin B has demonstrated, even toxic waste is something from which those operating in Thatcher's 'enterprise culture' can hope to make a fast buck, whatever the consequences for the population on whom it is dumped.

A classic and tragic example is provided by Bangladesh where tens of thousands needlessly face agonising death, lacking either clean drinking water or purification tablets. The source of the floods now hitting one of the world's poorest countries is the plundering of the Himalayan forests for quick profit which has led to the silting up of the rivers with the consequences that we have seen every night on TV.

\* \* \*

Human beings always confront nature through definite social relations. As Marx put it: 'a particular relation of man to nature is determined by the form of society and vice versa'.

In its early period the social relations of capitalism were progressive, stimulating the development of science and technology and thereby human control over the environment. But in the period of its decay - the period known to Marxists as the epoch of imperialism - in the hands of these same social relations, science and technology increasingly become instruments that threaten the destruction of all the gains from the past.

Capitalism is a society of general alienation, a society driven by blind laws where human beings are set against each other as rivals. The growing crisis in the relationship between human beings and nature can and will be overcome only through a socialist society where the antagonism of man and man and above all the conflict between the working class and the capitalist class have been overcome.

# WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £5,891.74

WHILE standing outside the TUC in Bournemouth last week we found ourselves next to some people trying to sell a magazine published by an organisation calling itself the Marxist Party, leaders of which are G.Healy, Vanessa and Corin Redgrave.

We expelled Healy in 1985 for physical and sexual abuse of our members - the Redgraves went with him. They now say that we are agents (they are a little coy about either publishing this fact or of stating the organisations for which we are allegedly agents). Malcolm Tierney and his three companions at Bournemouth would not answer the simple question 'Do you think we are agents?' They put their noses in the air and walked away. It is not surprising that Healy and the Redgraves are breeding such a cowardly bunch.

They have now gone over to craven support for the Stalinist bureaucracy. Workers Press fights against Stalinism and the bureaucracy in the whole labour movement.

We were at the TUC campaigning on three demands. First for delegates to act to secure the release of Moses Mayekiso, (general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, on trial for treason). Second to oppose the imposition of the Labour Relations Act in South Africa, which is modelled on Thatcher's anti-union laws, and third in defence of the right to strike of South African workers, which is under threat not only by Botha's laws, but through the policies of the African National Congress as outlined in their 'Freedom Charter'.

This campaign involves a direct struggle with Stalinism and the TUC bureaucracy who cringe before Thatcher's anti-union laws.

Please take up this fight with Workers Press and make sure our fighting fund is successful. With £4,108.26 to go to reach £10,000 by the end of September it is far behind.

Dot Gibson

Send donations to: Workers Press Fighting Fund  
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Workers Revolutionary Party/Preparatory Committee

## 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

### MEETING IN GLASGOW

Sunday 23 October  
1pm

Blythswood Hotel  
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Glasgow

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calls on all supporters to join the

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Name.....date.....

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# Post workers fight Tory plans

**BERNARD FRANKS** looks at the background to the post workers' dispute, and the implications for workers in other industries and services.

**THE FURY** of the post workers at their treatment over recent years, and threats of more to come, blew the lid off Tuffin's token 24-hour stoppage last week and turned it into a full-scale strike.

Their anger is wholly justified. This is not just a battle against Post Office management over a bonus scheme but a principled resistance to fundamental changes in employment, pay and working structures and conditions currently being applied or threatened throughout the whole of industry and services.

Behind the Post Office management stands a Tory government urging it to make the service ready for privatisation by:

1. undermining nationally-negotiated pay scales, replacing them with flexible regional rates;
2. breaking down established working systems and agreed conditions and employment rights by using casual labour; and
3. rationalising the industry to bump up profits and make it attractive to prospective buyers.

Built into this is the need to smash the Union of Communication Workers and end the danger of a powerful organised opposition.

It is the Post Office's simultaneous drive on all these fronts that has brought matters to a head.

## Decentralising pay bargaining

**SINCE 1986** the Tory government has been promoting regional differentials to break up national pay bargaining.

The aim: to cut wages in areas of high unemployment as the thin end of the wedge for cutting pay nationally and to establish cheap labour areas to which work can be transferred.

In the Post Office, blatant wage-cutting is out, so the plan is being tackled from the other end - higher pay on a selective basis in particular areas, supposedly as a 'recruitment incentive'.

Workers in the south east saw through this fraud, and declared the new payments should apply everywhere, or not at all. If the Post Office was really interested in recruitment, a separate facility already exists in the form of the London Allowance, which could be raised to a more realistic level.

Private employers have needed no urging to end national pay rates. Regionalisation moves have been made by Royal Insurance, Chubb, Bergers, Pilkingtons, Cadbury, Lucas and the National Bus Company.

In the case of the buses, transformation of municipal undertakings into private companies has led to all negotiations at a local level,

as Labour Research pointed out in May 1988.

Currently ITV, Boots, Thames Water, the NHS, civil service employees, and education (through the 'opting out' of schools) face a similar threat.

## Casual labour

POST office workers reacted swiftly to counter the use of casuals to move the backlog after the 24-hour stoppage.

There is far more to this than the concern about overtime.

The Tories are pushing the system developed in Japan and elsewhere, for undermining established full-time pay and conditions by creating a pool of casual, part-time labour which comprises the great majority of the workforce.

The reply is for trade unionists to fight for full-time, permanent jobs to cover the work, to ensure that part-timers are employed on a regular basis with all the employment rights of full-timers, and to ensure part-timers are unionised.

## Mechanisation and profits

CONTINUOUS mechanisation and automation of all sectors of the Post Office have been under way for at least 20 years.

The aim always has not been to make work easier and more satisfying, but to squeeze the maximum effort out of the minimum possible workforce.

Key to these methods has been their association with a series of rotten bonus schemes and productivity deals - performance-based incentive schemes and the like - all designed to ensure that the huge revenues resulting from the massively increased output don't end up in the workers' pay packets.

Not a little of the postal workers' anger is aimed at the union leadership for having repeatedly sold them out in this respect.

## Privatisation

THE **TORIES** aim to break up and sell off the Post Office at rock-bottom prices to their city associates.

Lifted out of the civil service in 1969 (when the Newsletter, forerunner of the Workers Press, warned this was the first step towards de-nationalisation), the Post Office now goes into its last preprivatisation phase.

Four areas have been defined: the 20-year old Girobank (up for sale next year), parcels, letters and counters. In any sell-off these may be broken down further.

Dispute or no dispute, the end to the Post Office monopoly on letters is the Tories' aim.

# SCAB-SMUGGLER MEETS ANGRY SCOTS

Mail is at a standstill in Scotland where almost 10,000 postal workers are on strike. The dispute escalated in Glasgow last weekend as workers walked out of the main sorting office where two workers were suspended for refusing to handle mail from Liverpool. Action quickly spread to Edinburgh, Paisley, Ayr, Perth and Aberdeen, and within days included every important depot in the country. On Monday 200 pickets in Edinburgh surged to surround a removal van whose undercover cargo, they discovered, was a group of casual workers. The driver was persuaded to turn back. Edinburgh postmen also succeeded in turning away four out of seven casual workers recruited from employment agencies to handle mail at the town's Waverley station. At a rate of 2.70 an hour cash-in-hand, the casuals were earning more than the regular postmen.

## A social service

THE **LARGEST** single retail business in Britain, currently employing 140,000 people and shifting 51 million items a day, the Post Office is a social service. But how much of this will survive privatisation?

At present 40 per cent of counter work is paying out benefits.

In total, 8.2 million pensioners (out of 9.5 million) and 6.2 million mothers (out of 6.7 million) opt for cash over the counter rather than payment into an account. Will their preference be considered in the run up to, or after, privatisation?

Similarly, letter delivery is to the front door and at the same price, one mile or a hundred, town or country. Will this survive the rush to cream off profitable sectors?

It is in everyone's interests, consumers and trade unionists alike, to support the Post Office workers against the Tory onslaught and to translate that support into action through their own organisations.

The UCW workers in their turn have to have a confrontation with their own leadership if they want to see battles led and fought on the best possible basis, and rights and conditions not given away.

# TASKS

## OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Journal of the Preparatory Committee for an international conference of Trotskyists

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# LETTERS

Write to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

## Let us all sing!

AS I read your front page about 'Hands off republicans': the only way they are going to do that is when they are dead!

For British law and their control methods can only be beaten by actions such as the IRA are taking, for they have the guts to do it.

Although at times they have rather indiscriminately killed others because of it, I personally think that if an extensive teaching programme on socialism was to take place all over southern Ireland, in every county as far south as Bantry Bay, it would perhaps speak of the necessary ingredients for the British revolution.

Perhaps if more also was taught to contradict the idea of a god, it would create more solid socialists generally.

Incidentally, guerilla warfare was very successful in the war in Indo-China. And I say this here especially to Simon Pirani, for was it not guerilla warfare tactics in 1954 that beat 10,000 crack French commandos and led to them extricating themselves from the war?

Lenin once said that if we can win the revolution by singing hymns, then let us all sing!

The IRA and their army of the people needs more soldiers and arms and guidance in conjunction with other trained soldiers or guerillas, who could come from the International Brigades as was in the Spanish campaign.

But trained through Red Brigades, organised and integrated, perhaps through the Fourth International, for surely such an organised force militarily trained would have a devastating effect.

All communists also should unite and rally together at meetings, for we are weak in our separation. But in unity and harmony in revolution, we will be something to contend with.

The main goal that we are all wanting is as one - revolution!

Bickerings and petty differences must be superseded by the most important guidance of all the power to the people through a transition, 'a new programme for revolution', to amalgamate all reds into a 'concrete mass of workers;' solidarity, for we have a world to win!

William Wright,  
Edinburgh

## For and against

I WOULD like to comment on the front page article on Ireland by Simon Pirani (Workers Press, 27 August 1988).

I disagree with him when he said that as Trotskyists, although we support the armed struggle we oppose guerillism and individual military attacks.

Surely this is a contradiction. We can't be for and against something at the same time.

We must support guerilla war tactics as adopted by the IRA, even though we recognise the limitations and inadequacy of such tactics, as not being on their own capable of smashing British imperialism in Ireland.

Every blow struck by the IRA and/or the INLA against the police-military war machine which oppresses and oppresses the nationalist people in the British occupied six counties of Ireland is a blow against capitalism and imperialism in Ireland. And it is also a blow for the British working class.

But despite the great heroism, courage, dedication and self-sacrifice of a few hundred at most well-trained and committed volunteers, whose spectacular feats and successes against the British crown forces are now legendary, it must take more than that: the Irish socialist revolution, in which such brave and committed comrades will play a vital role.

Every action, no matter how limited, and whether carried out by a hundred volunteers or by one or two, must be supported. Irrespective of our political differences with the republican movement we stand with them.

Thatcher authorises the shoot-to-kill barbarity, supported by the Haughey government in Dublin, and aided and abetted by the Labour and trade union leaders in both Britain and Ireland.

Only the IRA and Sinn Fein have consistently waged a struggle or resistance against the jackboot of Britain, from internment, to torture, strip-searching, supergrass-frame-up trials, and shoot-to-kill.

Let me tell the British working class and its leadership: you ignore the British state violence and oppression in Ireland at your peril.

During the miners' strike we saw a small glimpse of the repression perfected in Ireland and part of the daily life of the Catholic population in the working class areas of the six counties.

If the British working class understand that, then they will

understand why the IRA resists repression.

The day may not be too far away when the full might of the British state, including the use of the SAS, will be turned to put down workers here. You are next in line for the same treatment!

Supporting the IRA against oppression is easy in comparison to what we all have to do if we really want to free the Irish and British working class.

We must, as Simon says, build revolutionary leadership in both countries as part of re-building the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution as founded by Trotsky.

Charlie Walsh

## Opposition to perestroika

THE FACT that the new economic measures introduced in the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy to solve its economic crisis have met with hostility and contempt from workers is greatly to be welcomed.

But surely it is wrong on this basis to say:

'The answer cannot lie in opposing perestroika in favour of the old style of bureaucratic management. Instead we must see the way forward in the political revolution.' (Workers Press editorial, 20 August 1988).

We would surely not tell workers faced with new super-systems of exploitation in Britain not to oppose them because that would simply be defending old forms of capitalist exploitation, the answer lying instead in the social revolution, etc.

Isn't it on the contrary likely that the first steps along the road to political revolution for workers in the Soviet Union will occur precisely in the fight against the bureaucracy's attempt to apply capitalist methods of managements and working, arising out of such political questions as who is to benefit, who is to be in control, and what happens to the socialised means of production in the process.

In fact opposition to perestroika will not simply mean a continuance of the existing bureaucratic systems of working and management because perestroika has been launched exactly because those are now proving bankrupt.

Certainly the bureaucracy sees massive political dangers to itself in perestroika, which is why it has linked the system at all levels with 'glasnost' - at plant level, its own special brand of workers' participation designed to maximise productivity while heading off socialist demands.

True, as implied in the editorial, it would be stupid to say that Gorbachev is aiming at capitalist restoration through perestroika.

But it would be equally stupid to say that the Gorbachev mea-

asures for lifting the monopoly of foreign trade, allowing in hundreds of Western firms and revaluing the rouble so Russia can compete on the world market, can never lead to a dangerous undermining of the socialised means of production, and preparations by world capitalism towards counter-revolution and consequent restoration.

This cannot be dismissed by saying 'After all, is capitalism proving such a success in developing industry in the capitalist countries?'

In technical terms, yes it is. Even in Britain, closures and destruction of thousands of jobs has been part of a rationalisation programme which has actually increased production in some sectors. The fundamental problem of capitalism is not its failure but its success in this respect.

But it is precisely because the Soviet Union is not a capitalist country that enormous possibilities are seen for unloading surplus produce, surplus means of production and surplus capital there in a way that is becoming increasingly impossible in the capitalist world, developed or underdeveloped.

Gorbachev's 'deal' with the world's leading capitalists is that they solve his problems and help him placate a feared Soviet working class with 'reform', thereby getting him back on the road to socialism in one country (in reality the bureaucracy's ideal society which has nothing at all to do with socialism.) In return the world's capitalists get to solve some of their growing economic problems.

Of course capitalism demands an enormous price of the Soviet Union in terms of its disarming and withdrawing all support from liberation movements everywhere (true, only 'supported' to the extent that they can be headed by Stalinists and diverted into bourgeois-democratic channels).

At the last the imperialists will renege on any deal, instead rushing to incite counter-revolution and to smash their disarmed enemy (the Soviet working class) with their own revamped weaponry. In these conditions it is not enough to look to the world-wide overthrow of imperialism to conveniently, immediately coincide with the political revolution in the USSR - which it may or may not do.

It is in the controversy over these issues and the battle against the bureaucracy's increasing attempts to solve its crisis at the expense of the Soviet working class - rather than in any abstract demands for political revolution - that an extremely favourable situation can arise for building a party of the Fourth International in the Soviet Union.

That is surely the priority for Trotskyists.

Bernard Franks

FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES

# Trotsky on the independence of the Ukraine

LEON TROTSKY wrote this article, originally entitled 'Democratic feudallists and the independence of the Ukraine' in August 1939. Trotsky and the young Fourth International defended the right of the Ukrainians to independence. Here Trotsky uses an article by Kerensky (former member of the Provisional Government) to give an insight into the petty bourgeois opposition to the rights of nationalities to independence. We reprint this article as part of the discussion on the developments in the Soviet Union today, where the question of the rights of nationalities has shown itself to be bound up with the struggle against the bureaucracy.

In Kerensky's periodical, 'Novaya Rossia' ('New Russia'), for 12 July 1939, my article on the independence of the Ukraine ('The Ukrainian Question', 22 April 1939) is subjected to a 'criticism' of its own kind. From the standpoint of socialist, scientific, literary, etc., criteria, 'Novaya Rossia' is of course of no interest at all. But it possesses this merit, that it enables one to peer into the heads of the Russian middle and petty bourgeois democrats. Scratch any of them hard enough and you will find a feudalism.

The periodical fumes over the fact that I wholeheartedly and completely stand for the support of the Ukrainian people in their struggle for national and state independence. 'The separation of the Soviet Ukraine from the USSR doesn't embarrass L. Trotsky at all.' Absolutely so!

As regards Messrs. Democrats, they are not only embarrassed but deeply roused by the prospect of the separation of the Ukraine. The democratic urge of an oppressed nationality to gain its complete independence cannot fail to arouse the ire of feudallists. 'The question of how this revolution (the national Ukrainian revolution) will be utilised by Hitler for the realisation of his plans is not touched by Trotsky.'

The gentlemen of 'Novaya Rossia' consider that 'the separation of the Ukraine will lead to the military weakening of the USSR,' and they come very close to conclusion that Trotsky's politics serve Hitler. The same opinion is held also by the Kremlin. Great minds run in the same gutter, reads a French proverb.

Let us grant that the separation of the Ukraine does actually weaken the USSR. What to do then with the democratic principle of the self-determination of nations?

Every state which forcibly retains within its boundaries some other nationality considers that the separation of the latter would weaken the state in economic and military spheres. Hitler annexed the Czechs and semi-annexed Slovakia precisely be-

cause this leads to the military strengthening of Germany. Wherein does the criterion of our democrats differ from the criterion of Hitler?

As regards the nation of the Ukrainians, the democrats of Novaya Rossia following the not-uncelibrated democrat Miliukov are perhaps ready to answer to this question that the Ukrainians are 'by and large and in general' in all likelihood a nation, but after all there are limits.

In other words, if they are a nation, it is a second-class one inasmuch as the fate of the Ukraine must be determined by the interests of Russia, i.e., the Great Russian majority.

And this is precisely the viewpoint of the chauvinistic feudallists.

In the sad and sorry days of the February revolution, the Provisional Government brazenly refused to extend to the Ukrainians not only independence - the Ukrainians did not demand this at that time as yet - but also mere autonomy. Messrs. Democrats haggled over the national rights of the Ukraine like horsetraders.

They then took as their direct and immediate point of departure the interests of the old Great Russian 'masters' of the landlord, bourgeois, and democratic type. Today they are translating the very same great and glorious tradition into the language of the emigrés.

*'The Ukrainian revolutionary movement aimed against the Bonapartist bureaucracy is the direct ally of the international revolutionary proletariat.'*

From a much higher historical standpoint, namely from the standpoint of the socialist revolution, it would be quite possible to subordinate for a certain period of time the national interests of the Ukraine to the interests of the international proletariat if they came into conflict with one another. But there is no sign even of such a conflict.

The Ukraine is being strangled by the very same Bonapartist reaction that strangles the whole of the USSR, and undermines its capacity for self-defence. The Ukrainian revolutionary movement aimed against the Bonapartist bureaucracy is the direct ally of the international revolutionary proletariat.

The farsighted democratic feudallists are very much concerned lest Hitler utilise some time in the future the national Ukrainian revolution. They close their eyes to the fact that Hitler already today is utilising the suppression and the dismemberment of the Ukrainian nation.

*'The national revolutionary Ukrainian movement is an integral part of the mighty revolutionary wave which is now being molecularly prepared underneath the crust of triumphant reaction.'*

In contrast to Messrs. Democrats of the Menshevik and Narodnik variety, we do not at all proceed from the consideration that there is no beast more powerful than the cat. Hitler's strength in general, and in relation to the Ukraine in particular, lies not in himself but in the worthlessness and rottenness of democracy, in the decomposition of the Second and Third Internationals, in the vast wave of disillusion, decline and apathy among the masses.

The triumphant revolutionary movement in any country will sound the knell for Hitler. The national revolutionary Ukrainian movement is an integral part of the mighty revolutionary wave which is now being molecularly prepared underneath the crust of triumphant reaction.

**That is why we say: Long live the independent Soviet Ukraine!**

*'Democratic feudallists and the independence of the Ukraine' is reprinted in 'Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]', published by Pathfinder Press (1973, £7.95).*

## Stalin and 'The British Road'

LAST week I mentioned the new draft of the Communist Party programme 'The British Road to Socialism', and in last week's 'New Statesman & Society' a writer called Stephen Howe devoted a whole page to the same subject. There are some parts of his article I fully agree with: for instance, where he writes that 'as a political party the CPGB has absolutely no further reason to exist'.

There are other parts I disagree with: for example, his denial that the new CP programme is unmarxist. If my disagreement here makes me, as he puts it, a 'fundamentalist', then so be it.

There are also parts of Howe's article which I can't understand because he doesn't make clear what he's getting at. Thus he objects to what he calls 'the most rigid and archaic slogans from Lenin and Trotsky being used as polemical battering rams', but doesn't get down to cases.

The part of his article that I want to take issue with, however, is where he says of the new CP programme that it 'still keeps the title "The British Road to Socialism", adopted in 1951, when the first version was endorsed by Stalin and it was even believed (though wrongly) among the faithful that the World's Greatest Philologist had partially drafted it.'

Since it was I who, in December 1956, first made public the fact of Stalin's part-

authorship of 'The British Road to Socialism', and since this is virtually the only 'scoop' I can lay claim to in the whole of my career, I can't let Stephen Howe get away with that parenthetic 'though wrongly'.

I wrote in 'Hungarian Tragedy': 'The famous programme "The British Road to Socialism" . . . issued in February 1951 (without the rank and file being given a chance to amend it) contained two key passages, on the future of the British Empire and of the British Parliament, which were inserted by the hand of one Joseph Stalin himself, who refused to let them be altered.'

This information had been given me a few months earlier by Mick Bennett, at that time a member of the CP's political committee and, as I recall, assistant editor of the 'Daily Worker'.

Bennett told me that the draft of 'The British Road' had been taken to Moscow by Harry Pollitt, the party's general secretary, and someone else (John Gollan, I think). Stalin's insertions said it was a lie that the communists wanted to smash up the British Empire, and a 'slandorous misrepresentation' that the CP wanted to introduce Soviet power in Britain and abolish parliament.

Bennett's revelation immediately made sense for me of the 1951 publication in full of 'The British Road' in both 'Pravda' and the Cominform weekly, a journal which rejoiced in the title 'For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy' (another invention of Stalin's, who thought this title would be printed in full in the western press every

time they quoted from it, whereas in the event they simply called it 'the Cominform journal').

My 'Worker' colleague Leon Griffiths had been working on Budapest radio at the time, and told me later that when he suggested doing a programme on 'The British Road' his Hungarian bosses pooh-pooed the idea ('How can there be a separate "British" road to socialism, Comrade Griffiths?'); but when 'Pravda' published the full text, it was immediately: 'Why have you not done a programme on this important document, Comrade Griffiths?'

The British CP has never denied Stalin's part-authorship of the first version of 'The British Road', and I heard that Mick Bennett got into very hot water indeed for having told me about it. Soon after the Hungarian Revolution he left the 'Worker', was thrown out of the CP leadership, and started acting very strangely.

If all this doesn't convince Stephen Howe that he is in error, here's one final piece of evidence. Khrushchev told a congress of the east German Socialist Unity Party on 16 January 1963 (his words were quoted in 'Soviet News' no. 4797, dated 18 January 1963):

'It was none other than Stalin who, in an interview with British communists after the Second World War, spoke of using the peaceful, parliamentary way to bring about socialism and this is recorded in the programme of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The leaders of the British Communist Party know that this wording was proposed by Stalin.'

## News briefs . . . Peanuts

Medal-winning USSR athletes at the Seoul Olympics are to receive financial rewards from the Soviet government, for the 'years of preparation and effort' they have put in: £11,400 for a gold; £6,300 for a silver, and £2,850 for a bronze.

### POLITICS FROM THE PRISONS AND OTHER ARTICLES ABOUT IRELAND

FROM

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## Incentive

Upon being appointed, Ulster High Court judges will in future automatically be given a knighthood. Furthermore, as from 1 October, they will be getting an extra £900 a year when their annual salary rises to £68,500. The Lord Chancellor's Department has denied that this reflected difficulties in recruitment.

## All a matter of paperwork

If the Karin B's toxic cargo were to be adequately packaged and correctly specified, it could well find its way back into Britain. A Department of Environment spokesman pointed out that 'legally speaking, no cargo could be rejected on the grounds that it is too poisonous or dangerous. 'We have a very good industry in this country which is capable of handling these products' he said, 'once it is sure it knows what the products are.'

## Red cross

The Isle of Wight health authority is privatising the hospital ward sales trolleys which offer newspapers, sweets and stationery to bed-ridden patients. The service, which has traditionally been provided by Red Cross volunteers, last year only made a profit of £500. By handing the job over to private contractors, it is hoped to make at

least £3,000 a year.

## Show trial

Uri Churbanov must not be able to believe his ill-luck. The son-in-law of Leonid Brezhnev faces charges of corruption so immense they could cost him his life.

No wonder, as Tass news agency reported, he appeared 'pale, with bags under his eyes, did not react to the cameras, and looked at the audience with an air of detachment'.

Should it come to the death penalty, the blushing Gorbachev will surely intervene.

## Ever-modest Ted

The Chinese premier's son, speaking at a dinner in his honour at the Dorchester Hotel, said that, in his country, Edward Heath was more famous as a musician than as a politician. To which Heath, who was among the guests, is reported to have replied, 'In that case my reputation must be deplorable'.

## Soviet reactor

The Ignalina plant in Lithuania, which uses the same type of reactor as that involved in the Chernobyl disaster, has been shut down because of the outbreak of fire, the Soviet Atomic Energy Ministry has reported. There were no injuries or radioactive leaks, it said. But

experts had expressed concern about the safety of the plant's third unit, linked to a possible design fault.

## Libya

Sweeping economic reforms have been announced by Colonel Gadafi on the anniversary of his coming to power in 1969. Among them, small and medium-sized industries previously government controlled are to be privatised. 'Libyans should manage their country's production and service establishments on the basis of equality,' he stated in a nation-wide television broadcast. 'The system of partners, not wage-earners.'

These and other changes, such as attempting to neutralise the excesses of revolutionary committees, are seen as an effort to counter his regime's growing domestic unpopularity.

## Back in favour

'Savvy street-fighter' John Sasso, the campaign manager whom Dukakis sacked a year ago, is back on the case.

Sasso, whose reinstatement is seen by the Republicans as a desperate measure, was sacked last year over the video tape scandal of Senator Biden's plagiarising of a Neil Kinnock speech.

But in an attempt to revive his sagging presidential campaign Dukakis has recalled the man widely regarded to be his closest confidant.

# EFFING BUT NOT BLINDING

**M**ark Anthony Turnage's new opera 'Greek', it is good to be able to report, has aroused passions. Speaking no doubt for the Respectable Citizen who walked out of his Edinburgh Festival opening last month, one critic described it as little more than a string of four-letter words and music derived from the Austrian composer Alban Berg, who died in 1935.

To me it is a work of such assurance and conviction that it will be quite wrong if it is overshadowed by Edinburgh's other British premiere - the heavily sponsored and over-publicised American piece, 'Nixon in China'.

Based on Steven Berkoff's play, which ends its run in the West End this week, 'Greek' is a re-working of the Oedipus legend, set in working-class London during the Thatcher years.

In Greek mythology, you will recall, Oedipus hit the power jackpot by answering the Sphinx's 64,000-dollar question, but was brought down to earth with a vengeance when he discovered he had unknowingly killed his father and married his mother - just as an oracle - fortune teller in the Berkoff version - had predicted when he was born.

Thereafter, in the words of the American singer-satirist, Tom Lehrer, he 'plucked his eyes one by one/A tragic end to a loyal son/Who loved his mother.'

Sophocles' 'Oedipus the King' (fifth century BC) ends with the hero's blinding and exile. But in the Berkoff/Turnage update, we are spared the self-mutilation. 'Bollocks to all that', cries Eddie (as near to Oedi as you can reasonably get in English).

Releasing himself from the laws of drama with the same single-mindedness with which he has been achieving success in a Britain the Thatcher-minions seem to think they have freed from the laws of history, Eddie denies the audience the cathartic sense that things have reached their pre-ordained conclusion which it expects both from classical tragedy and opera.

In an ending arguably more outrageous even than that in Goethe's 'Faust', Eddie asserts: 'Yeaah, I wanna climb back inside my mum, what's wrong with that; it's better than shoving a stick of dynamite up someone's ass and getting a medal for it... Exit from Paradise, entrance to heaven.'

The setting, brilliantly designed by David Blight, established the idea that England in the 1980s is like an exercise yard in a prison, where some are able to go through the motions better than others, but where the garbage of the outside world is always liable to intrude.

In the opera the story is brought forward a few years from the 1980s setting of the play in order to include scenes of police violence reminiscent of the miners' strike and Wapping.

Eddie 'makes it' in Thatcher's brutal society apparently because he is thrown out of his 'we could always go down the pub,

son' working-class home. In the end, having conquered the Sphinx, he constructs his own morality in order to escape his fate by returning to the body which nurtured him.

Whatever you make of this, the triumph of Turnage and his collaborators (the direction and the performances are excellent) is to put a thoroughly contemporary theme on stage in a form (opera) which reached the heights of its achievement in the long-gone heyday of bourgeois society.

'Greek' is certainly a less ambitious piece than 'Nixon in China' which, in Edinburgh, was surrounded by so much discordant clamour of the 'and now a message from your generous sponsor' variety that I suspect mature judgment about it will have to wait for some considerable time.

The production came to the festival by way of compensation for lack of a major Italian opera in the year when 'Italy' was supposed to be the festival's theme. The Italian cancellations were blamed - in part, at least, quite wrongly - on the funding limitations thought necessary by the Labour district council, so that the whole occasion was politically charged from the outset.

(Stockholm Folk Operan, however, continued unperturbed with their annual demonstration at the festival that opera can be done effectively on a small scale. Their version of Puccini's last work 'Turandot' (1926) was no make-shift affair for the 'ordinary folks' but an original, post-Freud, rendering of what is arguably the last of the truly grand Italian operas.

Inspired by the success of this company, festival director Frank Dunlop has begun discussions aimed at forming a similar, full-time folk opera company in Scotland.)

'Nixon in China', the brainchild of the young, extravagant, and irrepressible director Peter Sellars, is full of the sort of harmonious music, hypnotic singing, and ambitious stagecraft which 'Greek' eschews. Houston's grand opera did it, very well according to opinions much more tutored than mine, in the grand manner, and the event did complement the more modest Turnage work, at least in the sense that both asserted confidently the possibilities of opera as a contemporary art form.

'Nixon' is based on the idea of Sellars, composer John Adams, and librettist Alice Goodman, that Nixon's visit to Mao's China in February 1972 was an 'heroic' event suitable for operatic treatment. I found the historical first act and the reflective finale rather a bore (with even the fine singing rendered less interesting by the too obvious use of amplification).

The central second act, however, is full of thematic inventiveness, surrealist wit (Henry Kissinger becomes a rapacious Chinese landlord in a play-within-the-play staged by Madame Mao), fine dancing and brash entertainment.

It seemed to me to owe as much to a wrestling with the best elements of the Broadway musical as with the operatic tradition which climaxed in Puccini, and maybe to be genuinely original precisely for that reason.



'Mao' in John Adams' 'Nixon in China'

The libretto, despite reading interestingly as a poem, and the characterisation, however, scarcely overcome the problem of implausibility which makes grand opera difficult for many. One can believe in poetry from Mao and Chou-en-lai ('I am old and I cannot sleep/Forever, like the young, nor hope/That death will be a novelty...')

But from Tricky Dicky and Pat: pull the other one...!

If the historical Nixon (and James Maddalena, a fine baritone, was made to look very like him) is really to be put on stage as a truly human figure - on the face of it, a pretty unlikely proposition - it would surely have to be as an individual embodying the corruption of an outdated and therefore endemically inhumane social system. Sellars, for all his subversive artistic originality - and despite the interesting portrayal of Kissinger - seems some way from this conclusion.

Whereas Greek may leave its political meaning open, 'Nixon in China' is, I think, politically plain confused - and, (pace the artistic purists), if writers and composers enter into themes such as these, they must expect to be drawn into political discussion.

The non-operatic version of 'Berkoff's Greek' was also on offer in Edinburgh in a performance of explosive conviction by the excellent Volcano Theatre Company at the Mandela. I saw it immediately after the opera, and it made quite an evening.

You can do things like that in Edinburgh in August.

Terry Brotherstone

# DEFEND THE POLL TAX REBELS!

BY SIMON PIRANI

THOUSANDS of Scottish working-class families will be fined this week for refusing to register for the poll tax. The initial fine of £50 is being levied by Labour-controlled Strathclyde regional council on an estimated 10 per cent of households who have not registered for the tax. There is a smaller proportion of offenders in Lothian.

As the special Scottish Labour Party conference to discuss the poll tax approaches (on Saturday 17 September), the bureaucracy's 'Stop It' campaign has denounced the tactic of non-payment proposed by left-wing constituencies.

Party leaders are confident that union block votes will defeat non-payment proposals, but concerned at the bitter rank-and-file hostility this will provoke. They are preparing to meet the problem in the only way they know: with a witch-hunt.

The ball was set rolling by Pollok MP James Dunnachie, who claims that 'Militant' supporters at a Labour public meeting broke party rules, by advocating the deselection of Strathclyde councillors who helped implement the poll tax.

What rules! The councillors - who voted to spend millions of pounds to impose the hated tax on the working-class voters who elected them - are in compliance; 'Militant', which correctly advocated their de-selection, are not.

The chief interpreter of this twisted Kinnock-ite logic is Joyce Gould, sent to Scotland from Walworth Road to 'investigate' the 'Militant' tendency. Bootlickers, grasses and careerists have been invited to give evidence - in the party's Lynedoch Crescent offices rather than in Pollok, where the bureaucracy has slanderously suggested they will be 'intimidated'.

The 'Militant' must be defended - without sanctioning their anti-Trotskyist perspective of recruiting to the Labour Party to 'turn it into a fighting socialist organisation', or their opportunist intervention in the anti-poll tax groups.

The Workers Revolutionary Party condemns the Labour witch-hunt. We call on Labour Party members to fight it, and raise the real issue - that through their powerful ruling regional Labour groups, the bureaucracy are imposing Thatcher's tax.

We will be joining next Saturday's lobby of the Labour special conference which is calling for a mass non-payment campaign to unite community groups and trades unions.

Prior to the conference, we are likely to see both the potential for such a movement, and the bureaucracy's determination to flatten it, during the Scottish TUC week of action on the poll tax.

The dizzy heights of Euro-communist 'new realist' idiocy will be reached at 11 am on Tuesday when an 'eleven-minute strike', to tell the Tories that it is the 'eleventh hour', is planned.

Many trades union activists have been fighting to turn this recipe for disaster into a fighting occasion by organising one-hour, half-day or 24-hour strikes, or lunch-time meetings. Such efforts are welcome. (NB - as well as backing the calls for 24-hour action, we

offer a free subscription to anyone who can give the name of the first 11 bureaucrats who, at the time of the stoppage, go into the pub to spend their members' money on 11 pints).

The criminal play-acting of the bureaucracy, which can only demoralise the movement, must be answered by renewed efforts to unite the trade unions and community groups against the tax.

The next stage of the campaign must be the defence of those who have not registered. If they are left to pay fines individually, and this is not considered a matter for working-class organisation, they will be picked off and intimidated by the councils who are doing Thatcher's poll tax dirty work.

**Saturday 10 September:**  
STUC anti-poll tax demonstration in Glasgow. Assemble Martha Street (off John St) 10.30 am.

**Tuesday 13 September:**  
strike action. Demonstration by Strathclyde Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Assemble 10.30 am Washington Street; march to City Halls.

**Friday 16 September:** public meeting by Scottish Labour Action and Govan Against the Poll Tax, 7.30 pm, Govan Town Hall.

**Saturday 17 September:** lobby of the Labour Party special conference, 9.30 am Govan Town Hall. (Conference starts 10.30 am).

## GENOCIDE AGAINST KURDS: STALINISM AND IMPERIALISM SHARE GUILT

OVER THE last eight weeks the Iraqi army has massacred more than 1,300 Kurds, most of them unarmed men, women and children. Many of them have died in horrific gas attacks.

Amnesty International last week accused Iraq of a 'systematic and deliberate policy of eliminating Kurdish people'.

Confirmation of the use of chemical weapons by Iraq came from a forensic pathologist. Dr Ian West's report confirms the use of mustard gas and more lethal chemical nerve agents, used principally against completely defenceless civilians.

Halabja, a city of 70,000, lost 4,000 people from mustard and cyanide gases unleashed by the Iraqi attacks of 16 March.

### Tacit

This genocide has received the tacit support of the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States, all of whom have remained silent.

The imperialists and the Stalinist bureaucracy have joined hands in a conspiracy against the Kurdish people, allowing Iraq to drag out the Geneva 'peace negotiations' with Iran so that they can pursue their war of genocide.

Hardly a word has been heard from Kinnock and company: they were too busy condemning the 'terrorism' of the IRA against the British army to open their mouths about this Thatcher-backed terror against a whole people.

The very day after the regime of Saddam Hussein accepted UN Resolution 598 Iraq turned its guns and bombs from the southern front opposite Basra to the mountainous regions of the north, their targets the two main groups of Kurds - represented by the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

The Kurdish people have been used in the most brutal and cynical manner throughout the eight year Gulf war: the five million Kurds of Iran received some support from Iraq while the three million Kurds of that country received backing from Iran, needless to say this 'support' was given not on any principled basis but simply to further the war aims of each side.

Whatever the outcome of the Geneva talks, they will bring no peace for the Kurds nor any resolution of their just struggle for the right to an independent Kurdistan.

The international working class has an immediate responsibility to provide the maximum political, financial and moral support for the struggle of the Kurdish people against imperialism and Stalinism.

## WHAT ARE THE ANC LEADERS UP TO?

BY WAYNE POULSEN

ANC leader Nelson Mandela was last week moved to a luxury clinic. He is being treated for tuberculosis and, many believe, prepared for release 'by stages' after 26 years imprisonment. For Botha this raises a dilemma, a 'no win' situation which only Mandela himself can resolve.

If the 70 year-old prisoner is not released he will die a martyr's death behind apartheid prison walls and no-one dares predict the consequences. But his unconditional release would give the working class an enormous boost in confidence. For Botha the only solution is to release a Mandela who has been compromised by a public renunciation of 'violence as a political weapon' and who has undertaken 'not to campaign for the process of violence in South Africa'.

By this means Botha would attempt to strip Mandela of his enormous political authority and to neutralise him in the struggles ahead.

Nelson Mandela has so far refused to give any such assurances, and maintained that he the only matter to be discussed is the handing over of power.

While Botha expects nothing but brickbats from his right as he negotiates the treacherous path, he can take hope from the position of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress itself, which two weeks ago issued a unanimous statement condemning recent attacks on 'soft targets' in South Africa including those made by its own military wing 'Umkhonto We Siswe' (MK).

This extraordinary document implied disciplinary

action would be taken against ANC fighters involved and characterised their actions as detrimental to the struggle.

One might ask, is this the same struggle to which Mandela remains true, and further aren't the ANC leadership doing exactly what their jailed leader refused to do?

Anyone who has followed the trajectory of the ANC/SACP (South African Communist Party) Alliance over the last four years must be struck by the contradiction between Mandela's intransigence and his organisation's consistent capitulation on all questions of principle, today culminating in the revised Freedom Charter proposals and the NEC statement.

Today the ANC/SACP is at pains to leave no doubt that any ANC government would safeguard the capitalist order and guarantee the rights of monopoly capital in post-apartheid South Africa.

Mandela's intransigence becomes a stumbling block for the plans of both PW Botha and the ANC/SACP!

To all ANC/SACP activists and supporters we say: break with this right wing treachery. There is no truly democratic alternative to apartheid-capitalism other than workers' democracy established through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The growing signs of divisions in the ANC/SACP provide great opportunities for the Trotskyist movement and the building of the Fourth International in South Africa.