

GORBACHEV LURKS BEHIND BETRAYAL OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

BY GEOFF PILLING

THE DECISION of the PLO Council meeting in Algiers last week to recognise the Zionist state of Israel is the product of months of intense pressure by the Stalinist bureaucracy on the PLO leadership.

Forty years after the creation of the Zionist colony in the Middle East, after decades of bitter struggle by the Palestinian people for the right to their homeland, the PLO, by accepting United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, has now recognised the right of the state of Israel to exist.

It has thus publicly accepted the right of imperialism to divide and break up the struggles of the working class and the oppressed throughout the Middle East.

What imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy fear more than anything is the growing revolutionary struggle of the Palestinian people, expressed in the intifada, which threatens to spill over to the whole of the Middle East.

No wonder the PLO's move was immediately welcomed by Moscow. 'The Soviet Union has been very active in the corridors making it clear that acceptance of 242 would furnish the vital lever it needs to persuade the US to bring pressure on the Israelis' reported 'The Guardian' last week.

Commenting on the Algiers meeting the Morning Star, paper of the pro-Moscow wing of British Stalinism said 'The PNC (Palestine National Council) decision to accept UN resolution 242, which implicitly recognises the right of Israel to exist, is a Statesman-like move.'



Angry nurses in January this year demanding proper rates of pay. See page 3 for a report on the new stage in the Health workers' dispute over gradings

The PLO decision was greeted by Britain as a 'significant advance on previous positions'. The Americans said the recognition of Israel was a 'positive step' but warned the Palestinians against taking unilateral action to change the status of the territories occupied by Israel.

But if imperialism and its Stalinist lackeys are chiefly responsible for this blow at the aspirations of the Palestinian people, the leadership of the PLO must also be condemned for this betrayal.

For the decision to accept the right of Israel to exist was not taken by PLO leader Yasser Arafat alone.

George Habash leader of the

'hard line' Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine opposed the decision at the Algiers meeting but immediately made clear that he will do nothing to take up a fight against Arafat. Palestinian 'national unity' is not 'a gift we will hand to the Israelis' said Habash.

He was undoubtedly echoing the sentiments of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

This capitulation by the PLO is not an accident. It flows from the petty-bourgeois politics of its leadership. Despite its considerable support from the Palestinian people, it has always resolutely opposed the spread of the revolution throughout the Middle East.

The events of last week graphically underline the fact that the only solution to the struggle of the Palestinian people lies in the fight for the United Socialist States of the Middle East.

An integral part of this fight is the struggle for the destruction of the state of Israel. While Israel exists there can be no unity of Arab and Jewish workers.

Far from being 'utopian' as the enemies of the Fourth International have always claimed, this is now the only realistic and principled way forward.

• See page 5 for article on the Intifada, from 'Combat International' June-October.

Workers Press

Defend Democratic Rights!

In her Mansion House speech last week Margaret Thatcher launched an explicit attack on the democratic rights of millions of workers and sections of the middle class in this country.

'We do have to sacrifice a little of the freedom we cherish in order to defend ourselves from those whose aim is to destroy that freedom altogether' she said.

The working class should be grateful that Thatcher spells out what has been the policy of her government ever since it came into office. This policy has been to destroy the basic rights which the working class has established over decades of struggle.

Thatcher has told the world that these rights are to be destroyed to defend the only 'freedom' which she and the capitalist class accept: the right of a tiny minority to exploit millions for its own gain and the right to employ any means to preserve its privileged position.

Her speech is the logical outcome of the attack which her government has launched on all fronts against the rights of trade unionists, the unemployed, the sick, immigrants, and those defending themselves before the courts.

Since 1979 a battery of legislation has been introduced to curb the rights of the trade union movement: the right to strike has been severely curtailed, the state has increasingly intervened in the internal affairs of the unions; even the right to belong to a union has been taken away from trade unionists at GCHQ.

But these attacks on the basic rights of the working class have not been confined to the unions. The right of the poor to adequate health care has been eroded by Thatcher's privatisation drive; youth have been herded into compulsory work programmes: a refusal to join means the loss of all benefits.

The capitalist state has launched a systematic attack on the rights of youth. Agents provocateurs have been sent amongst football supporters to frame them and make possible the introduction of compulsory identity cards for all football fans. The next step will be identity cards for everybody.

The rights of local authorities, many of them Labour controlled, have been usurped by the state.

Thousands of 'illegal immigrants' have no rights whatsoever. Living in constant fear of arrest and deportation, they are forced to work in the dirtiest, lowest paid jobs with no trade union protection.

The rights of defendants to remain silent in court has been removed for all cases in which Ireland is involved. Thatcher intends to extend this denial of civil liberties to all trials.

In the face of these attacks the Labour and trade union leaders have lifted not a finger to defend the gains from the past. Previous Labour governments with their anti-trade union laws and their anti-immigration legislation, their attacks on the National Health Service, prepared the way for Thatcher.

The cowardly refusal of these leaders to fight the Thatcher government has only encouraged the ruling class to press ahead with its attacks.

It is vital that the widest campaign in defence of all democratic rights be launched throughout the working class movement. Stripped of its rights, the working class ceases to be a class. The defence of past gains involves the entire fate of the working class movement.

We would like to hear the opinions of our readers on this vital matter.

WORKERS PRESS

FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £807.59

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY members have placed our Fighting Fund high on their branch agendas following reports of a discussion about Workers Press and finance on the Central Committee.

£2,000 must be collected. We have £1,192.41 outstanding. If 120 members and supporters were to donate £10.....

Dot Gibson

Please send your donations to: Workers Press Fighting Fund
PO Box 735, London, SW9 7QS

CENTRE FOR THE REBUILDING OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

WE ARE writing to appeal to you for financial support to help create a political centre for the rebuilding of the Fourth International.

Some three years ago, in October 1985, the Workers Revolutionary Party expelled its former leader, Gerry Healy, and his closest supporters Corin and Vanessa Redgrave, Sheila Torrance and Alex Mitchell. Healy was expelled for systematic sexual abuse of female comrades, for the regular use of violence against party members and for political slander.

This expulsion began a process of clarification on the nature of the tasks of the Fourth International. On the basis of ten points of principle, a Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists was established.

Along with others in the world movement we had to reconsider our history in the light of Healy's attack on its very foundations. We had to reconquer the understanding that the history of the Fourth International is a history of struggle against the efforts of Stalinism to destroy Bolshevism - by ideological, political and theoretical as well as physical means. It is the struggle against Stalinism that provides the essential continuity of the movement.

The Preparatory Committee, in working towards the International Conference, is in discussion with all who want to rebuild the Fourth International. At the same time, and for this reason, we have come to understand the necessity for a Political Centre in the fight against opportunism and sectarianism.

The current unprecedented crisis of Stalinism makes urgent and possible the rebuilding of the Fourth International. All the major historical questions about the October Revolution and its fate are opening up in the USSR and eastern Europe; this indicates the scope of the possibilities and responsibilities which fall upon us. We must establish a theoretical journal for wide distribution.

Already we have sent Peter Fryer to report developments in the Soviet Union; he established a series of valuable contacts. But we need to make further visits and fulfil our pledge to provide these comrades with material resources to assist their struggle. First and foremost we must ensure the widest possible distribution of Trotsky's writings; they also need basic equipment - tape recorders, even biro pens. This work is part of our central goal: the re-establishment of a section of the Fourth International in the USSR.

For this we need financial resources. To be specific, we need £1,500 guaranteed income every month and are aiming that £1,000 of this should be in the form of bankers' orders. Our appeal has met with a good response but we have not yet reached this target. We are therefore asking you to take out such an order and to participate in every other way possible in this important work.

Bankers' order forms can be obtained from:
Workers Revolutionary Party, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

LONDON DISTRICT OF THE WORKERS
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY.
IMPERIALISM, NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM IN
IRELAND: a series of three lectures by SIMON PIRANI
THURSDAYS AT 7.30 pm
at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
PART II. JAMES CONNOLLY: SOCIALIST AND
INTERNATIONALIST - Thursday 17 November.
PART III. FROM IMPERIALIST PARTITION TO SOCIALIST
REVOLUTION - Thursday 24 November.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
SOUTH EAST LONDON BRANCH
Tuesday 6 December - 7.30 pm
Charlton House (Wilson Room) - Charlton Village, London SE7
'Beginnings of the political revolution': a report by Peter Fryer on his
recent visit to the Soviet Union

MANCHESTER NURSES TAKE INDEFINITE STRIKE

MAKE THE AVERAGE THE MINIMUM

BY STRIKING NURSES
IN MANCHESTER

NURSES in Manchester are taking indefinite strike action to demand a minimum 15 per cent pay rise.

The Springfield COHSE branch which organises the majority of psychiatric nurses at North Manchester General Hospital took the initiative when they walked out a week last Wednesday. 200 nurses are involved in the strike.

On the same day Prestwick Hospital nurses in NUPE struck for four hours to lobby Salford District Health Authority.

NUPE members at Springfield joined their colleagues in COHSE on strike and the NUPE members also began indefinite strike action the following Monday morning. The majority of nurses have been given grades which do not reflect the jobs they do on their wards.

Professor Anderson, a member of Salford Health Authority publicly admitted 'the grading structure was meant to reward responsibility and experience but it has obviously failed to do this'.

The Authority chairman, Dr Beswick, also admitted that the government was not promising any extra funding if nurses were upgraded following successful appeals.

In any case the majority of nurses have little faith in the appeals procedure since those sitting on the appeals panels are the same people who carried out the grading and it is obvious that gradings were adjusted by the Regional Health Authority to keep the wages bill inside the government-imposed cash limits.

Because thousands of nurses have handed in appeals our managers have said it could be two years before they are all heard.

At many hospitals in the North West nurses have decided to work to grade and only carry out duties they have been graded for.

However, nurses at Springfield and Prestwick believe that strike action is the best way to force management to concede higher grades.

It will also show the public that while 15 per cent may be the average pay rise the majority of nurses are below the average and the lowest paid nurses have been given the lowest increases.

While at work providing minimum cover on the wards we are carrying out normal duties and demanding we be given grades that recognise these duties.

All nursing assistants at Prestwick have been given the lowest grade. According to this they work under direct supervision at all times.

But when nursing assistants on nights regularly left in charge of wards said they would not work without qualified supervision on the ward, they were threatened with discipline.

According to the grade criteria, nursing assistants do not participate in the assessment of patients and planning their care, but at Prestwick all nursing assistants do this and should therefore have been graded C. Nursing assistants have received

an 8 per cent rise.

The majority of sisters and charge nurses have been graded F because they are not considered to have continuing responsibility for their wards. Their pay rise is only 4.3 per cent.

On many wards both sisters or charge nurses have got F grades, which would suggest that no one takes continuing responsibility.

Enrolled nurses and staff nurses who are regularly in charge of wards have not had this recog-

nised in their grades.

Health Minister Kenneth Clarke keeps telling the press that the grading provides a new career structure. This is a joke to nurses who have years of experience but have been given the lowest grades possible.

The nurses in Manchester were hoping that following their lead strike action would spread throughout the country and expose the government's lies that it is looking after the health service.

The real face of Labour on Ireland

BY SIMON PIRANI

THERE have been '20 wasted years' and 'almost 3,000 thousand dead' since British troops went into the north of Ireland, says the 'Time to Go' charter launched by the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI).

'And yet we are no nearer a solution', says the charter. 'Successive British policies have failed.'

But what have these policies 'failed' to do? They have failed to crush the Irish working class. They have failed to silence the centuries-old demand for Irish national self-determination.

The interests of the working class, and of Ireland, can only be served by a struggle for this principle in the British workers' movement; it has to be supported without conditions - any weakening on this principle is a concession to imperialism and its agents in the Labour Party leadership. And yet this is the demand which is missed out of the charter.

'Let's develop the debate about how British withdrawal is to be accomplished', says the charter. And the pro-imperialist Labour leaders will agree. In fact they have such a debate at the Labour Party conference every year, and approve a policy of 'Irish unity'... with the 'consent' of loyalist voters in the six counties and the 'consent' of imperialism.

To 'debate' with these leaders the future of Ireland - without, first of all, a recognition of the Irish nation's right to determine its own future free of imperialist domination - is a concession to chauvinism.

Rather than declaring itself for the principle of Irish self-

determination, the 'Time To Go' charter declares its starting-point to be 'that there will never be peace while Britain remains in Ireland'.

Here is its most deceitful phrase. For there can be no peace as long as the profiteering imperialist system remains, not only in Britain but throughout the capitalist world.

Specifically, there can be no peace in Ireland without the defeat of British imperialism and its allies in the Dublin government - and their defeat can be achieved not by peaceful means, but by the struggle of the working class.

While the 'Time To Go' charter talks of peace, British imperialism and the Labour leaders who support it go on with war. And yet the charter is addressed to these same Labour leaders!

The WRP is in favour of directing demands to these leaders, including the demand that they pledge themselves to unconditional recognition of Ireland's self-determination.

And where workers place demands on them to oppose strip-searching, the PTA, frame-up trials and other barbarities which arise from imperialist occupation, we support these demands too.

We do this with the aim of clarifying before the working class the true nature of this Labour leadership - a pro-imperialist cancer, which must be burned out of the labour movement; a leadership against which us Trotskyists aim to build a new, revolutionary leadership.

The leaders of the LCI, including supporters of 'Socialist Action', also call themselves Trotskyists.

But their behaviour over the charter is a rejection of the fundamental conceptions of working-class leadership on which

Trotskyism is based: instead of fighting to demonstrate the inherently pro-imperialist nature of the Labour bureaucracy, fighting for its defeat - they try to pull Irish and British workers alike behind that leadership's left wing.

This group continues to plug the 'Time To Go' charter - and indeed provide the main foot-soldiers campaigning for it - even though it has been rejected by the Irish in Britain Representation Group, the Troops Out Movement, and others in Britain's Irish community who see it as a concession to chauvinism.

The British labour movement must solidarise itself with the Irish struggle by working-class action, not appeals to the imperialist state. Every effort must be made to expose and defeat those pro-imperialist Labour leaders and the anti-Irish racism which lives in the Labour Party as a result of their actions.

- Win support for Irish self-determination, without conditions, from Labour Party and trade union branches.

- Drive those Labour leaders who stood and cheered the Gibraltar murders, out of the labour movement. Demand the re-expulsion of Sam Campbell, who was expelled from Lothian Labour Party for making a bigoted anti-catholic speech when sitting as a Labour councillor, but was re-instated on the Labour NEC's orders.

- Bring to book the Camden and Brent Labour councillors who have adopted anti-Irish housing policies.

- Censure the Camden councillors who walked out of a council meeting addressed by Jim McCabe of Belfast whose wife was killed by a plastic bullet.

- Bring to book the Labour councillors in Scotland who, in line with Thatcher's policy of destroying free speech on Ireland,

INTIFADA

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Opposition and Continuity of the
Fourth International.

revolutionary attempt. It is a titanic struggle which rehabilitates the truth, Trotsky and Trotskyism in the history of the Soviet Union and of the world working-class movement.'

In case Savas Michael might be misunderstood, he went out of his way to be even more explicit in his paper ('Socialist Change') of October 22:

'Stalinism is dying under the blows of perestroika, which is the form taken by the political revolution.'

This is the bankruptcy of revisionists such as Healy, now mouthing the very Pabloite revisionism which they opposed in 1953.

Two years ago, in an introduction to Trotsky's pamphlet 'The Class Nature of the Soviet State', Savas Michael denounced Gorbachev as the 'right-wing, capitalist restorationist' section of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

That was before Healy, at a summer school in Greece, informed him that Gorbachev was in fact leading the political revolution.

For us, as for Trotsky, the political revolution is the overthrow of the bureaucracy by the Soviet working class, in unity with the proletarian socialist revolution in the capitalist countries.

32 years ago, the Trotskyist movement had to stand firm on this against those who had illusions in Khrushchev and Mikoyan, with his admissions such as, 'For some 20 years we actually had no collective leadership and the cult of the individual prevailed.'

Today, Gorbachev is making the same noises. He has no explanation in place of the bureaucracy's fig-leaf 'cult of the individual', and he cannot explain why after 1956 came 'stagnation'.

The reality is that 'socialism in one country' has reached an impossible dead-end, and the limited 'glasnost' which Gorbachev hoped would act as a safety-valve under the bureaucracy's control serves only to stimulate the massive and vital forces of the Soviet working class.

Their demands for the truth and for the restoration of the rule of the working class will take shape in the political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy.

Only the programme of the Fourth International declares and fights for the integral place of this political revolution in the world socialist revolution.

I cannot do better, on this question, than refer readers to the recently published pamphlet of comrade Nagy (Varga) on the Political Revolution, where it is explained in detail.

One quotation from it will serve as conclusion: 'The bureaucrats, even the most 'progressive', want their programme accomplished by the bureaucracy itself, renewed and purified of course, with a purged state apparatus - in other words, accomplished from above.'

'Even if they are forced to take account of the movements of the masses, which they regard as adjuncts.'

'Whereas the Fourth International envisages and employs the programme as a means of mobilising the working class so that in their independent activity they themselves give expression to this programme through their organs of struggle which have grown up in the mobilisation itself.'

'This is more than a difference with the bureaucracy; it is a conflict.'

WE EXPRESS our deep solidarity with the just struggle of the Palestinian people, whom we support completely and unconditionally.

See how all the enemies of freedom collaborate against them. The same who - for forty years! - have 'legally' organised and carried out the infamous division of Palestine. Their false friends are also the same: those who accept and extol the acceptance of the 'faits accomplis' imposed by world imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy.

Last year's meeting of the representatives of these two forces, had as its sole aim the strangling and crushing of the growing people's struggle. We said of Reagan and Gorbachev's meeting (December 1987 'Combat International'): 'The only ones that Reagan and Gorbachev really wish to disarm are the oppressed peoples fighting for liberty.'

They anguish over the 'hot spots' of the world which they propose to 'pacify'. The workers and oppressed peoples of the whole world see in the West Bank and Gaza what this 'pacification' means - disarming of the people by bandits in uniform armed to the teeth... On these matters there is an agreement whose contours are perfectly defined, even if the bourgeoisie and the bureaucrats are careful not to unveil its exact terms.

The speed of subsequent events has fully confirmed this characterisation, and has underlined even more the dangers, from Poland to Southern Africa, and of course, in the Near and Far East, in particular Palestine. A formidable international mechanism has been set going to persuade, to push and to pressurise the Palestinians, through their organisation the PLO, to recognise Israel. Nothing and nobody is missing from this unholy counterrevolutionary alliance. The first link in the chain is the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Gorbachev himself has taken the matter in hand. He called upon a visiting Arafat to bow to 'reality' and to recognise Israel. Such haste, whose brutality might surprise some naive people, is explained by the Stalinist bureaucracy's inordinate fear of the driving force of the Palestinian struggle for general revolution in the Near and Middle East, on the doorstep of the USSR.

Following in their footsteps, the so-called 'communist' parties of the entire world have again betrayed the Palestinian people by criminal passivity - made more obvious by some 'alibi' actions - in the face of the huge scale of reprisals carried out against a whole people by the Zionist army. This abandonment itself is enough to unmask the Stalinist apparatus as primarily responsible for the lack of a powerful mobilisation of the international workers' movement to support the Palestinian people. On the contrary, the Stalinist regimes compete to assist Israel, and the Hungarian government has ostensibly proposed to its guest, Shamir the terrorist in person, to re-establish diplomatic relations - thus stabbing the Palestinian uprising in the back.

The world bourgeoisie busies itself with the same enthusiasm. One of its local representatives, King Hussain has abruptly withdrawn from the territories under his care. He thus forces the Palestinians, left without administration, to form a slum state there which signifies the recognition of the fact of Israel.

In the deafening international chorus demanding the PLO make this recognition, amongst the loudest are the so-called 'so-

cialist' parties, despite their Zionist propensities. Mitterand, despite some Zionist groans in the ranks, has come to the aid of Gorbachev to pressure for the recognition of Israel.

Now the initial aim of the Palestinians, the destruction of the Zionist state, remains the necessary condition of any just system - for the creation of a free Palestine in the whole country.

No compromise is possible which implies the recognition of Israel and, therefore, takes away from the Palestinians the right to claim back their country. A slum state set up in the occupied territories, uninhabitable and utopian, excluding the majority of Palestinians, is nothing but a scarcely disguised form of the recognition of the Zionist state. This is unacceptable.

Decades of struggle of the Palestinian people show that victory lies in the spreading of the revolution to all the countries of the Near and Middle East.

Only a generalised revolution, which is already partially and confusedly engaged in Libya and in Kurdistan, would be able to destroy Israel along with other artificial states and, giving back to all peoples their countries, would set up the united socialist states of the Near-and-Middle-East.

The liberation of Palestine will be found in permanent revolution. Permanent because, establishing itself on an international scale, it will realise the unity of the oppressed. Permanent because such an international unity, aimed not only against the principal enemy, Israel, but also against all the open and clandestine supporters of world imperialism, can only be by nature proletarian.

Alongside this perspective, it is more and more apparent that the PLO, conforming to its bourgeois nature, is preparing to capitulate on the basis of acceptance of the international status quo. It looks with hope towards the same United Nations, which, 40 years ago, organised the division of Palestine, instead of working for an alliance with the struggling masses, like the Kurds, who find themselves sometimes in a similar situation.

After handing over the fighters to Hussein's killers (Jordan), after abandoning Lebanon following deals with American imperialism, they are ready to make a qualitative leap on the path of betrayal. They follow the road trodden long ago by the Chinese Kuo-mintang.

It is in the interest of Palestinian militants, fighters, workers, peasants and youth to study the terrible experiences of the Chinese revolutions in the years 1920 and 1930. They will conclude that only a proletarian leadership is able to grasp a real and realistic perspective in the permanent revolution and, in consequence, to construct the Palestinian section of the Fourth International.

The first task of reconstruction of the Fourth International in Palestine remains the clear recognition - on the basis of an unconditional support for the struggle waged by the Palestinian people - of the nature of that struggle, of the nature of its present leadership and effective and generous assistance in building the proletarian vanguard of the Fourth International in Palestine.

We must admit that we still fall far short of this, including what is needed on the level of analysis and characterisation of the class struggle, of leadership and of the tasks posed in relation to the Palestinian revolution. The contamination of Stalinism through the medium of the revisionists has profoundly affected the Fourth International. It will certainly break free of this, but with great difficulty.

In preparing the International Conference, the Preparatory Committee has resolutely taken the road of rebuilding the Fourth International by re-establishing in its entirety its programme of the permanent revolution.

The political line of Gorbachev

Cliff Slaughter comments on Gorbachev's report to the Ninth Special Conference of the Communist Party

PART IV Continued from Workers Press 12 November 1988

GORBACHEV'S report to the Special Ninth Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did not only deal with questions of foreign policy, relations with the capitalist world, etc. He referred also to the political system in the Soviet Union and the Stalinist distortions of history and theory.

'Why, then, is the task of radically reforming the political system being put forward today? First and foremost, comrades, it is a fact - and we have to admit this today - that at a certain stage the political system established as a result of the October Revolution underwent serious deformations.

'This made possible the omnipotence of Stalin and his entourage (?), and the wave of repressive measures and lawlessness...'

Gorbachev and his faction in the bureaucracy get to the water but they cannot drink.

They do not and cannot explain these 'serious deformations' because such explanation means exposing their own counter-revolutionary character as the bureaucracy which usurped workers' power in the USSR. They rest on the defeat and physical liquidation of Trotsky and the Left Opposition, which fought these 'deformations' at every turn.

See how Gorbachev squirms when the problem of explaining these 'deformations' comes up: 'Why did the CPSU, which had been formed as a truly democratic organisation, one bone and one flesh with the working people, fail to block the deformation of socialism, the processes associated with the cult of Stalin's personality?

'Why then having exposed and denounced the departures from the principles of Leninism, did it confine itself to superficial changes which made possible the grave phenomena of stagnation in the country's development?'

Very good questions! Gorbachev is asking not only why the Party was unable to stop the Stalinist degeneration, but also why, after the 20th Congress (1956) had 'exposed' Stalin's crimes, were only 'superficial' changes made. We can be sure that these are burning questions for millions in the USSR. But where are the answers?

Giving his own answer, Gorbachev only repeats the question in another form, as follows: 'The answer is above all in the fact that definite deformations had occurred in the Party itself, in its activities and ties with the working people, which brought about the loss of many democratic Bolshevik traditions inherent in, traditions founded through the efforts exerted by Lenin and his associates for many years.'

And again, 'answering' the question by simply repeating it in another form: 'The matter is, in the first place, that the principle of democratic centralism, which underlies the structure and activity of the CPSU, was at a certain stage largely replaced by bureaucratic centralism.'

Yes, this destruction of democratic

Speaking to the assembled Soviet and Party leadership after the annual Red Square parade to commemorate the October Revolution, Gorbachev declared that 'only by following the path of socialism' would the USSR be able to take on the 21st century. Two days earlier, Nicolai Slioukov for the Politburo had said the same thing, adding that socialism was 'definite and irreversible' (a phrase invented by Stalin in explaining that 'socialism in one country' had been achieved, and, incidentally, echoed only last year by ex-General Secretary of the WRP Michael Banda.)

The letter of a 16-year-old schoolgirl to Komsomolskaya Pravda gave a stinging response to this kind of official bluster:

'Show me somebody I can believe in. Everywhere you can hear people shouting 'perestroika'. It is frightening because they are the same people who ten years ago were worshipping Brezhnev. Does that mean that all this is a sham? Does it mean that it was in vain that for 70 years people gave their lives to soviet power?' (from a report in the French daily 'Liberation', 8 November 1988.)

And on the eve of the anniversary of October, 'Moskovskaya Pravda' published four articles on the repressions of the Stalin era.

centralism in the Bolshevik Party was of enormous importance. But democratic centralism is not just a 'principle' which 'underlies the structure and activity' of the Marxist party. What 'underlies' democratic centralism itself?

Democratic centralism is the form of organisation and work of a revolutionary party based on Marxist theory, and on the conquests of this theory in the struggle to lead the proletarian revolution.

What Gorbachev cannot say is that democratic centralism was destroyed in the CPSU as part of the attack on this Marxist foundation of the party.

It was the programme and 'theory' of 'socialism in a single country' which

conquered, through the faction of Stalin, resting on the defeats of the proletarian revolution in the west, the isolation of the workers' state in a backward country, and the subsequent pressure of the bureaucracy and the middle classes on the exhausted proletariat.

He is no more able to go to these roots than were Mikoyan or Khrushchev at the 20th Congress 32 years ago.

Mikoyan told that Congress: 'Scientific work in the sphere of the history of the Party and of Soviet society is, perhaps, the most backward sector of our ideological work...'

'We are still without a real Marxist work covering the period of the civil war. A number of books that have been published suffer from major shortcomings, are of no scientific value, and some are even harmful.

'Some of the complicated and contradictory events of the Civil War or 1918-20 are explained by certain historians, not by the changes that took place in the relationship of class forces at definite periods, but by the alleged subversive activity of individual party leaders at the time, who many years after these events were incorrectly proclaimed enemies of the people.'

Now see what Gorbachev says about the years following that 20th Congress:

'Following the 20th Congress of the CPSU there was, as is known, a noticeable increase in activity in the social sciences. New scientific trends and a new generation of scholars appeared, capable of doing things in a new way.

'But soon there was a resurgence of the voluntaristic approach to formulating problems in the social sciences, of dogmatic methods of solving them.'

In the economy and in the political system, there was, similarly, no progress as a result of the exposures of the 20th Congress. The Stalinist bureaucracy persisted, and produced what Gorbachev likes to call 'the period of stagnation'.

Revisionists falsely claiming to be Trotskyists will still present to us the prospect of the Stalinist bureaucracy's 'self-reform', this time through the leadership of Gorbachev.

A good example is the group in Greece led by Savas Michael, a political follower of Gerry Healy. In a recent radio interview, he performed as follows:

Interviewer: 'Concerning Gorbachev, do you consider him pro-Trotskyist, as your enemies say?'

Savas Michael: 'We don't apply labels, as they have done to us for so many years. Gorbachev is neither Trotskyist nor anti-Trotskyist.'

'Gorbachev is the leader of perestroika, with a leading role, but he is not perestroika itself.'

'Perestroika is a broad process which goes beyond the individuals who are leading this

Personal Column

Peter Fryer

Profits first, safety last

OVER the past 18 months, in Britain and around its shores, almost 400 people have perished in disasters caused by greed.

In the Zeebrugge disaster 190 ferry passengers died. In the Piper Alpha oil rig explosion 167 workers died. And in the Kings Cross escalator fire 31, or possibly 32, people died and another 50 were injured, many of them terribly and permanently.

These three disasters share a common factor. All were caused by incompetent and complacent management that gave profit-making top priority and put the safety of human beings right down at the very bottom of the list.

But the blame for the Kings Cross disaster, whose horror still haunts, or should haunt, everyone who passes through that station, doesn't rest solely on the two top managers who resigned just before the publication of the Fennell report.

Yes, they suffered from 'dangerous, blinkered self-sufficiency'. Yes, they had 'a blind spot over the hazards of fire on escalators'. Yes, they thought that fires were 'inevitable' on the system they ran, and forbade their staff to call a fire a fire, insisting that fire should be referred to always as 'smouldering'.

But it was the Thatcher government which insisted, when London Regional Transport was set up in 1984, that its public subsidy be reduced from £190,000,000 to

£90,000,000 over three years. And this target was over-achieved.

It was Nicholas Ridley who on 20 July 1984, as Thatcher's transport secretary, wrote a letter of instructions to the new body's chairman requiring him to 'reduce the present excessive call on ratepayers and taxpayers'. In that two-and-a-half-page letter the word 'safety' did not appear once.

'You have told me', wrote Nicholas Ridley, 'that you can achieve a reduction in unit costs of 2.5 per cent in real terms over the next few years. I look to you, if possible, to do better than that.'

So there were immediate cuts in staffing and maintenance work. Management was actively discouraged from applying for funds to ensure proper safety standards. Safety provisions were hit hard, over and over again.

Only three weeks before the Kings Cross disaster the finance director of London Underground circulated to his colleagues details of an obligatory package of cuts - the word used was 'mandatory' - including savings on police radios, savings on train radios, and savings totalling no less than £1,000,000 on lifts and escalators.

The finance director's private memorandum, dated 30 October 1987, admitted that operational manpower savings totalling £570,000 would mean that some barriers would be unattended, 'with consequent risk of increased congestion'.

This memorandum admitted that the closed circuit television link to line controllers' offices was 'very unreliable'. Nevertheless the budget for this was slashed by £50,000.

Cameras were accordingly taken out of service, so that on the night of the Kings Cross fire the closed-circuit system was simply not functioning properly.

Now all this is shocking enough. But what needs to be clearly understood by everyone outside London Underground - the workers there already understand it perfectly well, but no one listens to them - is that the same government-imposed philosophy of profits first, safety last, reigned at LRT after the Kings Cross fire and reigns there still.

When the London Fire Brigade inspected six stations, including Kings Cross, in March of this year, it found more than 50 fire risks. To travel by tube in London is to take your life in your hands.

In some ways hazards to passengers are being increased, not decreased. Thus four extremely busy, extremely congested lines (Piccadilly, Jubilee, Northern, and Central) are to have driver-only, no-guard trains. The 4ft-high barriers that are part of the new automatic ticket system are potential death-traps.

A draft five-year business plan circulated on 18 August of this year laid it down that £110,000,000 earmarked for safety improvements would not be spent unless the Fennell report insisted on a fire certificate for each individual station. In fact the report has failed to recommend this; so this money will presumably not be spent.

It's all well and good to demand that Sir Keith Bright and Dr Tony Ridley be charged with manslaughter, and no doubt they should be. But they were merely the willing tools of successive transport ministers, and were carrying out a cost-cutting anti-safety policy decreed from the very top.

The main burden of guilt rests squarely on Margaret Thatcher and her gang. These are the criminals who should stand trial for manslaughter.

AS I SEE IT

BY TOM OWEN

The Patriot's Game

I HAD not realised how far Taylorism had penetrated into American life until I began to take more than a casual interest in the mysteries of American football.

It is the razzamatazz and brash style of the game that first attracts you, then you are confronted with an incomprehensible jargon and impenetrable rules system which initiates assert make up a physical (non cerebral) game of chess.

It is an elaborate territorial game, a form of Taylorist rugby in which every sequence is presented as a set of complex game plans which are analysed, quantified and recorded.

It is not only the 'points' that are counted but time and space are divided into seconds and yards, set against each other and then become, amongst other things, the endless source of statistics.

The appropriateness of this game as a symbol of American life struck me when watching the last hours of that two-year contest, the US Presidential elections.

The increasing lack of public political life and debate which is characteristic of US politics, and leads to intrigues and scandals, also means a focus on pure style, razzamatazz and dramatic foul play. It was not really surprising that the television commentaries were full of the extended metaphors of American football.

The NBC broadcasters began their analysis for British screens by claiming that the last eight months of the campaign had been high on 'bodily contact'.

I assume this was a sporting euphemism for 'dirty tricks'. The game plan behind these tactics

had been to force Dukakis out onto his blind side as a 'liberal' who lets murderers out of prison.

Dukakis 'lost a lot of ground' because he did not immediately 'pick up' this challenge and block the Bush run for line.

But we were informed that there had been a late Dukakis 'surge' and that the game would 'run to four quarters'.

Then we were treated to the real subtleties of the election game, the statistical complexities of press predictions and sampling.

In the midst of the TV spectacles concentrated on the arcane mathematics of the electoral college system one 'celebrity' journalist wrote that he was proud to be an American because a pregnant 38 year old woman with two small children had turned up to vote.

Not to be upstaged by this example of Southern charm, the hard bitten New York 'precinct man' mused that he had seen a woman and a large dog enter the polling booth and was not sure which had voted.

Nevertheless these were patriotic moments and patriotism was the yardstick of political honesty.

Caspar Weinberger in the

studio defined the yardstick of patriotism as the 'defence' budget - the greater the arms budget, the greater the patriotism.

For the Boston liberals and academic 'experts' this had all the finesse and elegance of the Chicago Bears game play involving 'The Refrigerator'.

As we reached the final quarter the liberals rallied, convinced that a combination of foul play and the late Dukakis rush had offended some influential Democrats so much that they would be very obstructive to Bush's promises on taxes and economic policies to reduce the budget deficit.

At that point Dukakis conceded victory to the other team and urged full support for the next President. He was quickly followed by the Stalinist bureaucracy who welcomed the 'continuity' Bush represented.

And now for some more statistics. Barely 50 per cent of eligible electors registered, the turnout amongst these were around 70 per cent. Bush got roughly 18 per cent of the US vote.

It is clear that the US working class has not yet had its say, and its game plan won't be restricted by time-outs.

Ireland 1968-1988

TWENTY years ago, 1968, was a watershed in Irish politics, a year in which a fightback began against discrimination and oppression which rocked the whole rotten edifice of the gerrymandered northern state and left it to rely on the life support system of the British army.

Set up in 1921, the illegitimate six-county state was based on a crude head-count designed to keep Catholic nationalists in the minority and protestant unionists in the majority.

It was sectarian by design.

No Catholic had held a cabinet post for over half a century. A study based on the 1971 census concluded 'there is a marked tendency for protestants to dominate the upper occupation classes while Catholics are found predominantly in the lower classes'.

Sir Basil Brooke, Northern Ireland's longest serving prime minister, spelled it out:

'I recommend those people who are Loyalists not to employ Roman Catholics, 99 per cent of whom are disloyal...If you don't act properly now, before we know where we are we shall find ourselves in the minority instead of the majority.'

Unionist local authorities failed to house Catholic families. Discrimination became a way of life.

Against this background the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed. It was purely reformist, its constitution modelled on the British National Council for Civil Liberties.

It included middle class Catholic reformers, trade unionists, Stalinists, Liberal Protestants and some representatives of radical students at Queens University. NICRA adopted the following demands:

a. One man one vote in local elections; b. the removal of gerrymandered boundaries; c. laws against discrimination in local

Twenty Years On. Edited by Michael Farrell. Brandon, £4.95

government and the provision of machinery to deal with complaints; d. allocation of public housing on a private system; e. repeal of the Special Powers Act; f. disbandment of the B Specials.

These were reformist demands which failed to challenge the basis of this discrimination, the existence of the six-county state itself.

For the Stalinists of the Communist Party of Ireland this was not surprising as they had long abandoned the national struggle and had opportunistically organised themselves on partitionist lines creating separate parties for the six and 26 counties.

The civil rights movement in the United States provided inspiration. As Sean MacStiofain was later to comment:

'Little did the handful of people who sponsored it or the Republican leadership who supported it imagine where that first civil rights march was to lead the entire nation'.

The first civil rights march in August 1968 was to protest against the eviction of a Catholic family by Dungannon District Council, who planned to re-allocate the house to a 19-year old protestant.

The Dungannon-based Campaign for Social Justice attracted 4,000 people to a march from Coalisland to the Market Square in Dungannon. The march encountered the joint opposition of Paisley's UPV and the B Specials.

The march organisers ordered the protesters home. Instead they sat in the middle of the road singing until midnight.

Marches consistently encountered the combined resistance of Loyalist gangs and the Royal Ulster Constabulary which culminated in a gangster-like attack on the Belfast to Derry march of 1969. This march, frequently diverted

by the RUC, was stoned and attacked by Loyalist thugs.

At Burntollet Bridge near Derry the marchers were led into the ambush by senior police officers and received a terrible beating. Some of those doing the beating were off duty members of the B Specials.

It was in August, following the 'Battle of the Bogside' in Derry where the state forces were beaten back by working class Catholics, the northern state became completely unbalanced and British troops intervened.

The developments in Ireland that year were part of a huge world-wide movement of the working class - the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the Prague spring in Czechoslovakia followed by the Soviet invasion, the murder of 300 students in Mexico on the eve of the Olympic Games, the revolt of the French working class culminating in the general strike of that year.

Michael Farrell makes the connection in his introduction to the nine essays in this book. He recalls:

'...a couple of car-loads of Young Socialists and students joined the march from Belfast where we had just held our own march early in the day in protest at the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. For us it was symbolic fusing of the international student rebellion with the smouldering revolt against specific grievances of Northern Ireland, but when we arrived at Coalisland we had an immediate clash with the stewards of the civil rights march, who objected to our red banner and the flag of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, left over from our regular Saturday afternoon protest against the war in Vietnam'.

Most accounts in the book are similarly more anecdotal than

academic, described by one reviewer as 'a series of literary home movies'.

Gerry Adams recalls his early involvement in the civil rights movement and the breakdown in republican isolation that resulted; he explains how the struggle for civil rights developed into a struggle for national rights and the subsequent division between those 'intent on exposing the irreformable nature of the Six Counties State' and those 'following a gradualist approach to reform the state'.

The book contains contributions from Geoff Bell, Carol Coulter, Michael Farrell, Bernadette (Devlin) McAliskey, Inez McCormack, Ellis McDermott, Ed Moloney and Margaret Ward.

In the issue of the 'Irish Worker' dated 14 March 1914, at the first intimation of partition, James Connolly wrote:

'Such a scheme as that agreed to by Devlin and Redmond, the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish Labour Movement, and paralyse all advance movements while it endured.'

'To it, Labour should give its bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death if necessary, as our fathers fought before us.'

History has confirmed Connolly's prognosis. Twenty years on, the British state is more brutal and barbaric than ever, imprisoning thousands of republicans, operating a shoot-to-kill policy, abolishing the right to silence, falsely imprisoning the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four and imposing South African-style censorship on the media.

Twenty years after the civil rights marches, Connolly's 'carnival of reaction' has become an everyday reality.

Roger McGough

LETTERS

Scottish Nationalism

West Scotland WRP'S description of the Scottish Nationalist Party as 'petty-bourgeois' (Workers Press, 5 November), is highly misleading. As I pointed out in a letter you kindly published in your issue of 17 January, 1987, the SNP is decidedly to the left of centre in the political spectrum.

Apart from its campaign of polltax nonpayment (which must have the support of the middle as well as the working class if it is to have any hope of succeeding) the SNP advocates the removal of all nuclear bases

from Scottish soil, the closure of nuclear power stations, an end to the dumping of nuclear waste and the public ownership of the land. As one who desires to see a Scottish Workers Republic as advocated by the great Marxist Leninist, John MacLean, I always vote SNP, as they are the only party wholly committed to independence for Scotland.

A vote for Labour is a wasted vote, as we will never see a socialist Scotland so long as our nation remains a part of the United Kingdom. It was this realisation too, that persuaded my friend Nan Milton, daughter of John MacLean, to join the SNP in 1986.

John L. Broom
Stromness, Orkney

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GOVAN - TWO FINGERS TO THE LABOUR PARTY

WEST SCOTLAND WRP

'WHEN I got into that polling booth I just couldn't put my X down for Labour' said an anti-poll tax campaigner and lifelong Labour voter.

Along with 14,676 others, the Scottish Nationalist Party's Jim Sillars in the Govan by-election helped destroy Labour's apparently impregnable 19,500 majority. It was a swing of 33 per cent.

Neil Kinnock pronounced idiotically that the crushing defeat of his candidate, print union official Bob Gillespie was a 'protest vote against Mrs Thatcher'.

The Govan electorate has always hated Thatcher, producing enormous Labour majorities through-out her reign.

This vote was a protest all right - against the Labour Party's crawling submission to the poll tax and other Tory policies.

Govan voters' thinking was clearly expressed at a public meeting to which all candidates were invited, called by Ibrox-Cessnock Against the Poll Tax.

Angry questions were directed at Ayrshire Labour MP George Foulkes, deputising for Gillespie.

Only electing a Labour government could defeat the poll tax, said Foulkes - opposition by other means was worthless.

He did not answer a question about whether he personally would refuse to pay.

Trying to recover credibility in his summing up, Foulkes reminded the audience that his party had supported the miners.

'What kind of support was that?' demanded furious hecklers. 'Kinnock supported the police' they yelled, and 'The Labour leaders sold out the miners'.

This is why Labour lost! Yesterday they betrayed the miners, today they betray the poll tax fight, rejecting a non-payment tactic and implementing the tax in councils they control.

The middle class SNP, whose majority group councillors in Angus implement the tax as vigorously as the Labourites, sensed the issue was a winner.

Sillars was identified on the ballot paper as 'SNP - no poll tax'.

His victory certainly didn't signify an upsurge of Scottish nationalism and an exit poll conducted at voting stations indicated that only one fifth of voters backed the SNP's 'independent Scotland'.

Sillars led the Scottish Labour Party, which split from Labour in the mid 1970s, and is not shy to talk about 'socialism'.

Traditionally-Labour voters who backed him, interviewed on TV said they were 'voting for a Labour man' and did not think they were betraying their class.

The SNP has proposed a Labour-Democrat-SNP electoral

alliance to turn Scotland into a 'Tory-free zone'.

The right wing Paisley Labour MP Allan Adams responded by speculating that, if the SNP stood down in Ayr (defence Minister George Younger's constituency) and Labour stood down in Tory Nicholas Fairbairn's seat, the same could be achieved.

There were recriminations from 'left' MPs against Kinnock. If the by-election has thrown the Labour leaders into deep crisis, this is no thanks to their 'opponents' (?) in Stalinist and even so-called 'Trotskyist' groups.

The British Communist Party called for a Gillespie vote, and its members asked anti-poll tax campaigners not to lobby those

Labour councils who are implementing the tax, for fear of high-lighting Labour's treachery during the campaign.

The Militant group has long made it clear that they will subordinate the anti-poll tax campaign to electoral politics.

The Labour Committee on Ireland made its contribution. They pleaded with Sinn Fein who had considered standing to highlight the new censorship laws not to do so in case it cost Gillespie the seat.

In the event all this didn't help. The crisis of working class leadership is staring us in the face.

The WRP bases itself on the fight to resolve that crisis.

It can't buy love - but what about a degree?

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

THE UNIVERSITY of Bradford announces this week that it will be awarding honorary degrees in social sciences to two upstanding citizens.

One is going to Kenneth Morrison - 'for his contribution to the development of William Morrison's into a leading UK supermarket chain.' The other goes to Colin Sampson - 'for his work as Chief Constable of West Yorkshire since 1983 and in particular in recognition of his services for the City of Bradford.'

When asked to comment on the awards, a Bradford academic said 'It is difficult to see exactly what contribution Kenneth Morrison has made to the social sciences. To my knowledge there has been no discussion amongst staff or students at the university as to what the positive results of building a chain of supermarkets is.

What about the contribution of the people who work there, and what about the small shops he has driven out of business? The real question is, of course, how much cash he is going to give the university.

'When you add to this the government's new policy of making students take out loans to pay for their education, why don't the university authorities make a proper job of it and hang out a sign in front of the building saying 'Degrees for sale?'

'I find it even more of a struggle to see what Constable Colin Sampson has contributed to social sciences. Nobody in the faculty, and no academics have been asked to assess his 'contributions'.

'His major pieces of work have been to preside over West Yorkshire during the period of the miners' strike, with all the attendant police thuggery, and to set up agents provocateurs to frame innocent football fans, including Patrick Slaughter.'

In a document leaked a fortnight ago, Robert Jackson, the Minister for Higher Education reveals his belief in a 'more market-oriented system' of financing universities and polytechnics. He advises industrialists to acquire the right to control the nature of courses in institutes of higher education through their financial contributions.

Tory plans for the privatisation of education are identical with those for all other public services - local government, transport, water, electricity, gas, British Airways - etc etc etc.

But - when the development of human culture is subordinated to the British shopkeeper's search for the most profitable kind of soap powder, you have a society which turning on even the cultural gains it has made in the past.

The British grocer's daughter demands that everybody think like a British grocer.

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NO CHANGE ON LONDON UNDERGROUND

BY ROY THOMAS

SIR KEITH Bright, Chairman of London Regional Transport, (appointed by Ken Livingstone, ex-leader of the GLC) has reluctantly resigned following the report on the Kings Cross massacre.

He has been replaced by another member of LRT's board, Sir Niel Shields, a former boss of the New Towns Corporation before it was sold off.

He is a member of 'Aims of Industry', of the right-wing Carlton Club, and a former Conservative candidate.

Shields has taken over the job of ensuring that the cost-cutting philosophy of London Underground and London Buses which created the conditions for the death of 31 (or was it 32 or 33? - there are still parts of bodies unaccounted for) at Kings Cross does not change.

He has the support of Michael Marsh, the new chairman and managing director of London Underground who has replaced Dr Tony Ridley.

Mr Marsh has no transport background. He is a chartered accountant whose background is House of Fraser, John Mowlems, and Bank of America. He was appointed to the LRT board only eight months ago by Paul Channon, Secretary of State for Transport.

Shortly after he was appointed, Judy Snell, a senior corporate planner for LRT was writing to Underground and Bus senior managers saying they 'should maintain a dynamic approach to seeking out unit cost reductions'.

So while the two top directors have changed, the policy laid out by the Secretary of State for Transport has not.

National Union of Railwaymen officials say any changes at Kings Cross are cosmetic - and the introduction of new exit gates, designed to do away with ticket collectors is still to go ahead. Had they been in operation last November the dead would have numbered in the 100s rather than tens.

It is not possible to run a safe public transport system in any major city at a profit.

Since the plan is to sell off London Underground and London Buses in the next few years, it must be made profitable, whatever the cost in lives.

The change of chairmanship will not make London's buses and trains safer.

The only way to do that is to put the control of the industry into the hands of those who use it and work in it.