

ROBERT BLACK WRITES ON:

WHILE the question of Stalin was never allowed to intrude into the bureaucratic stupor of the 23rd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, it would be wrong to say that its proceedings were unrelated to the history of the Stalin era of Soviet politics. First of all it confirmed that the removal of Khrushchev in October 1964 was directly linked to the crisis of the Soviet economy, and in particular to the collapse of its agricultural programme.

In Brezhnev's report to the Congress, he drew attention to 'serious shortcomings in the system of procuring farm products', which 'hindered the planned management of agriculture'. An equal obstacle to expansion was 'the unjustified reorganisation of agricultural bodies, the imposition of stereotype recommendations from above and the underestimation of science and the experience of long years of practice'.

HOPELESS POSITION

Much of the background to the general problems of the Soviet economy has been dealt with by Michael Best in his two recent articles in The Newsletter, but a closer look at the problems in agriculture would help to round out the picture of the antagonisms within the bureaucratised Soviet economy, and underline the hopeless position of the Stalinists in their attempts to realise in a rational way the potential of a planned economy linked to automation and atomic power.

Starting with the 'secret speech' which debunked the Stalin myth at the 20th Congress in early 1956, Khrushchev began a series of manoeuvres on behalf of the Soviet bureaucracy, designed to postpone or head off a clash with the East European and Soviet working classes, who were pressing more and more for the settlement of accounts with the accomplices and heirs of Stalin. This bogus 'de-Stalinisation' — Stalinism without Stalin — combined with promises of a rapid improvement in living and working conditions, formed the essential plank in Khrushchev's domestic platform.

NATIONAL REVOLTS

But it was these same half measures and glib promises that became factors in deepening the crisis in the bureaucracy. The revelations about Stalin, coupled with deep unrest at the continued lag in living standards in relation to the sacrifices made by the working class, triggered off national revolts against the bureaucracy in Hungary and Poland, with the working class youth in the leadership.

While Gomulka, by balancing between the church, the working class and the army, and breaking with the most discredited Stalinists, was able to re-establish the rule of the bureaucracy without the intervention of Soviet troops, the Hungarian Stalinists found themselves isolated to such a degree that their restoration to power could only be carried out through the use of Soviet armed forces, many of whom either went over to the Hun-

garian workers or simply refused to fight.

This chain of events, particularly the sympathy shown amongst the Soviet people themselves for the overthrow of the bureaucracy (Moscow students were expelled for calling meetings in solidarity with the revolution) forced the bureaucracy to take panic measures to defend its own position in both the Soviet Union and in relation to the other workers' states.

Hurried plans were drawn up for the emergency 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1959 by which, it was claimed, the living standards of the working population would be increased at an unprecedented pace. After a year of advance publicity, the 20-year plan for building communism in the Soviet Union (not conditional on any successful revolutions in the capitalist world) was adopted by the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Party in 1961, being accompanied by further ritual denunciations of Stalin, by the very men who assisted him at every stage in his liquidation of the Bolshevik Party.

The successful implementation of this plan hinged, it was



Gomulka re-established the bureaucracy in Poland

made clear, on the rapid expansion of Soviet agriculture and light industry.

By 1980, it was claimed, the Soviet Union would be approaching a society of abundance in material goods, in which the role of money as a means of consumption rationing would be fast withering away. The central thesis of the 20-year Plan was 'to ensure a gradual transition of the Soviet countryside to communist social relations, and to eliminate, in the main, the distinctions between town and country on the basis of a powerful expansion of the productive forces in agriculture'. (Khrushchev, Report on the programme of the CPSU, 22nd Congress, 1961.)

PRODUCTION FIGURES

How far has this 'powerful expansion in the productive forces in agriculture' taken place? What is the reality of the Soviet economy in 1966, and how does it stand in relation to the Khrushchev Utopia of 'communism in one country'?

Below are set out the targets and actual levels of production in key commodities in agriculture and light industry.

Column A gives the level of production as it stood in 1960, column B the target for 1965 according to the 20-year plan. Column C is the target set by the same plan for 1970, while column D gives the levels to be reached by 1980, the beginning of Soviet 'communism'. Bracketed under column B is the actual level of production reached in 1965, while bracketed in column C is the target for 1970 as revised by the 23rd Congress.

| Commodity (millions of tons) | A 1960 | B 1965 | C 1970 | D 1980 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----------|------------|---------|
| Grain | 132 | 180 (120) | 225 (167) | 290-300 |
| Meat | 8.7 | 16 (9.3) | 25 (11) | 30-32 |
| Milk | 62 | 105 (65) | 135 (78) | 170-180 |
| Potatoes | 84 | 147 (81) | 140 (100) | 156 |
| Raw Cotton | 4.3 | 6 (5) | 8 (5.8) | 10-11 |
| Mineral Fertilizers | 14 | 50 (31) | 77 (62-65) | 130 |
| Eggs (1,000 millions) | 27.4 | 37 (29) | 68 (34) | 110-116 |
| Leather Footwear (Millions of pairs) | 419 | 515 (486) | 825 (625) | 1,000 |

These figures, all taken from Soviet official sources, reveal very clearly a profound crisis within the Soviet economy. They prove that the 20-year plan for building communism has already been silently scrapped.

For example, grain production stands lower today than it did at the outset of the plan, as does potato production. The target for meat has been cut by over half for 1970, while milk and eggs suffer almost equal reductions. Nearly all the targets set for 1965 will not be reached even by 1970, such is the chronic lag in the development of Soviet agriculture.

It is by the crucial test of labour productivity that any productive system is in the last analysis judged, and in this respect the Soviet economy, and in particular its agriculture, lags far behind the United States, where, in some departments of production, output per man hour is over 10 times as high. The fortunes of the bureaucracy are therefore closely bound up with the success of its attempts to provide a rapidly rising level of living standards for the Soviet people. We can see from the figures quoted that periodic purges of the apparatus, as in the days of Stalin, are solving nothing.

PROGRESS WATCHED

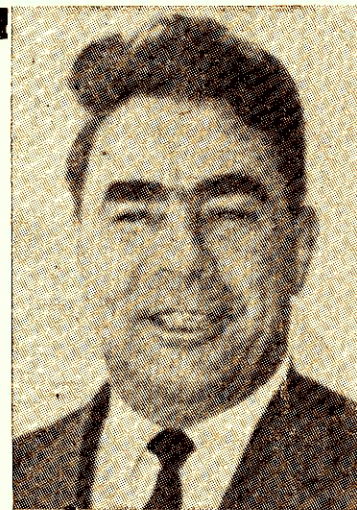
The most important factor, however, is not reducible to a bare statistic. It is the Soviet working class. We can be sure that its most conscious layers are watching the progress (and the shelving) of the 20-year plan with great attention, and have already noticed that the alleged march to communism is not accompanied by either an equalisation in the distribution of the national income, or a decline in the privileges and social aloofness of the ruling bureaucracy.

Far from moving towards the Communist social relation of 'from each according to his ability, unto each according to his needs', the New Plan adopted at the 23rd Congress envisages 'the steady enhancement of the stimulating role of wages in the solution of the major tasks of the Five Year Plan'.

These factors, taken together with its international role as an ally of imperialism, separate the bureaucracy from the mass of the Soviet people more and more sharply. The East European and Soviet working class will be driven into struggles against this reactionary force at a time when the bureaucracy leans increasingly on imperialism to defend its position at home.

Gromyko's visit to the Pope, and his clinching of the deal with Fiat, together with the sinister collaboration between the East German Stalinists and the top West German social democrats for a fake German unity over the heads of the German working class, are all part of this rightward anti-

The 23rd Congress and Soviet agriculture



The antagonisms within the bureaucratised Soviet economy, which Brezhnev (above) admitted was leading to 'shortcomings' in agriculture, emphasise the inability of Stalinism to defend and extend the conquests of the Russian Revolution.

socialist trend of the bureaucracy.

Within the USSR, the bureaucracy attempts to overcome these contradictions in several ways. It tightens up labour discipline in the factories by the introduction of workers' record books and the increased use of the Leiberman costing system. It seeks to ease the social tensions caused by these measures through the use of scapegoats (the removal of Khrushchev and the execution of Jews for 'economic crimes' are examples of this) and by holding out the everlasting carrot of 'a planned all-round increase in the well-being of the people'.

In order to plug the yawning gaps now appearing in the Soviet economy, the bureaucracy reaches out tentatively to the most powerful of the capitalist monopolies such as Krupp, I.C.I., Mitsubishi and now Fiat. Without the advance of the workers' struggle for power in the imperialist states, this growing together of the two sectors of the world market, ruptured temporarily by the Russian Revolution, contains within it the danger of restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. This restorationist pressure exerted on the Soviet economy finds an echo within certain layers of Soviet society itself, not the least im-

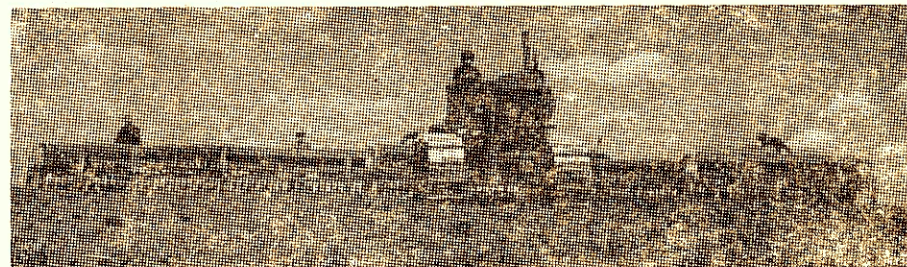
portant of these being the peasantry.

It was the bungling of collectivisation of agriculture by Stalin from 1929 to 1932, carried out in a brutal and empirical way as a panic response to the grain strike of the richest peasants, that alienated the vast mass of the rural population from Soviet power, thus breaking the link between town and country so carefully nurtured by Lenin and the Soviet government in the early days of the revolution.



Khrushchev's removal linked with agricultural crisis

The political neutrality and even hostility of the peasantry was dramatically revealed during the Nazi invasion of Russia, when, after years of anti-German propaganda, millions of Ukrainian peasants welcomed the imperialist armies as liberators from communist tyranny.



The 20-year plan has, in its first years, failed to meet targets.

Anti-Communist campaign in Cyprus

BY KYPROS TOFALLIS
Cypriot Journalist

TODAY, the island of Cyprus is in as big a political mess as it was three years ago, when the inter-communal troubles started. The inability of the Makarios regime to settle the problem had been manifested, first by accepting the London Conference of January 1964, and secondly, by applying to the United Nations to help him restore order. The United Nations, always eager to work as agents of the imperialists, immediately stepped in and managed to bring the Greeks and Turks apart (instead of bringing them together).

The Makarios-Grivas Differences

The present so-called differences between Makarios and Grivas are merely differences of personal ambi-

tion in controlling the machinery of the government of Cyprus (this is to represent the interests of the ruling class).

Their differences are not of an ideological character. In fact both of them want and foster Enosis (Union with Greece), a solution which actually means throwing the island into the arms of NATO.

General Grivas, the extreme right-wing leader of the armed forces in Cyprus, and a former collaborator with the British during the Greek Civil War, wants to have Enosis at once, whereas Makarios, supported by AKEL, the island's Progressive Working People's Party, believes that a plebiscite should take place to enable the people to choose whether they want to join with Greece or not.

The A.K.E.L. Standpoint

AKEL, the official Communist Party of Cyprus, has no programme of turning Cyprus into a socialist island. Like many other Stalinist

Parties, instead of taking the initiative and leading the people to socialism, it cooperates with the agents of the oppressors of the Cypriot masses. So far, it has not made a single call to both the Greek and Turkish peasants, and workers to join forces, and face the enemy, which is a combination of foreign imperialism and native capitalism.

By fostering Enosis, AKEL is isolated from the Turkish workers and peasants. AKEL is afraid of the Greek right wing (as well as the Turkish right wing) and hence, it fears alienation. A Communist Party which has no Communist programme to offer the masses is not worthy to be called Communist.

The Greek right-wing press

The Greek right-wing press and especially the newspaper 'Machi' ('Combat'), edited by Nikos Samson, a former EOKA member, has started just recently a fierce campaign against AKEL and all Communists in Cyprus by calling

them traitors and agents of the Soviet Union.

Everyone knows that AKEL is a pro-Makarios Party, but Samson wants to stir further trouble during this difficult period when the big monopolists and Anglo-American imperialists will rejoice to see a further split in Cyprus, i.e., a split between the Greeks.

Unity of people urged

The left-wing newspaper 'Haravghi' ('Dawn') calls upon the Cypriot masses to ignore the provocateurs and remain calm. This futile attempt, originating from NATO circles, will not succeed. The people of Cyprus should realise that if they want to achieve a socialist victory they should first and foremost throw out the British bases and the UN troops as well as the Greek and Turkish forces stationed in the island.

On eliminating the foreign interests then and only then can Greeks and Turks proceed to the socialist road, the road which will bring everlasting harmony and peace to the long-suffering Cypriot workers and peasants.

