

Workers Press

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Stalinism's Past Haunts Gorbachev

THE 19TH Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is over. But the crisis that forced Gorbachev to call it is far from over.

'Soviet Weekly' says the discussions 'prolonged and stormy' (like the applause was in conferences in the Stalin period).

But hardly had the storm died down than a new one opened. The Armenian-dominated parliament of Nagorny-Karabakh last week threw down a challenge to the Soviet central power by declaring for the secession of the region from Azerbaijan, and for moves towards transfer back to Armenia after an a 65 year interval.

Gorbachev will now have to decide whether to use force to assert the will of the Moscow bureaucracy or to give in to a demand that could open up the nationalities

question throughout the country.

A central theme of Gorbachev's opening speech was the urgent need to 'democratise' Soviet society. He made a call for increased power to the Soviets. Delegates took this up and the cry 'All Power to the Soviets' was heard from some delegates.

But the 'soviets' that now exist in the Soviet Union bear little or no resemblance to the Soviets brought into being during the preparations for 1917.

One of the main purposes of Stalinism was to strip the Soviets of their power and reduce them to a mere appendage of bureaucratic power.

Genuine Soviets will emerge only in the struggle of the working class against the bureaucracy. Such soviets will

undoubtedly arise in the coming period. And they will certainly have no place in them for the bureaucracy.

'Drive the bureaucracy out of the Soviets' is the slogan under which the working class will fight, not Gorbachev's fraudulent claim that he is 'democratising' the Soviets.

The nature of the Soviets, of the rights of nationalities underlines the fact that it is questions of the past as much as those of the present that haunt the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In his closing speech Gorbachev said: 'We have spent a lot of time coming to understand the society in which we live, to understand the past in which

continued on back page



'Show me another man able to organise almost a model army within a single year and win the respect of military experts. We have such a man.' (V.I. Lenin, on Trotsky's role as architect and leader of the Red Army)

Workers Press

Tory Cynicism - Again

Speaking about the funding of the nurses' pay and grading award in the Commons in April Mrs Thatcher said: 'The Government have decided that the cost in excess of the allocation already made for this year should be met from the reserve.'

She was lying - yet again.

An internal paper of the North-western regional health authority leaked to 'The Guardian' last week reveals that it is at least £3.3 million short of the funds it needs to meet the nurses' pay claim in full.

The authority indicated that it would have to impose extra cuts on the service or slow down the re-grading exercise through which nurses will receive the bulk of their award that was supposed to have averaged 15.3 per cent.

Tory Health Minister Tony Newton said in the Commons last week that it was too soon to say whether the Government's £749 million to finance the deal would prove to be enough. But he did refuse to promise that any shortfall would be made good.

So the NHS's crisis is back at the centre of the political agenda. This will undoubtedly fill the trade union and Labour leaders with dread. They no doubt hoped that the settlement earlier this year had taken this explosive issue off the agenda.

But it will not go away. In the last century Frederick Engels explained that it was impossible for capitalism to solve the housing crisis, a proposition amply verified by subsequent developments.

It is becoming ever-clearer that capitalism is equally incapable of solving the health crisis facing millions of people, not only in the colonial and semi-colonial countries where health care is often non-existent but in the 'rich' capitalist countries such as Britain.

The NHS, brought into being by the post-1945 Labour government, is being strangled by a capitalist system with not interest in the health and well-being of the working class but concerned only with the ruthless drive for profit.

For capitalism the working class is, and can only be, a means to an end: the making of profit. The working class is however the most vital element in the productive forces: that is the most decisive component of all those material and human forces that society as a whole has historically accumulated.

The fact that millions of ordinary people are condemned to second class health treatment, die earlier than they need, are forced to live in pain and suffering is a vivid expression of the stagnation, even decline, of these productive forces.

The needs of capitalism come increasingly into direct conflict with these productive forces which the drive for profit more and more threatens with destruction.

Thatcher does not deny the nurses their pay award out of sheer meanness. She merely indicates that the crisis of the NHS will not be resolved within the confines of capitalism.

An adequately funded health service requires the nationalisation of the drug monopolies, under workers' control and without compensation. Only then can the grip of the drug barons on the health service be broken.

The regeneration of the NHS involves a full inquiry by the Labour movement about its present funding and its real needs.

The trade union and Labour leaders oppose this programme. It urgently requires a new revolutionary leadership in the working class to fight for this policy.

We ask you to join us in building it.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far £3514.26

AS YOU will have seen we had more than a few teething problems with last week's Workers Press, due entirely to the new technology we are using. We hope these problems will be quickly overcome but we meanwhile ask you to be as patient as possible with us! It is our aim to produce the best possible paper, technically and politically, within the limit of our resources.

There is no doubt that a weekly paper fighting to build a section of the Fourth International in Britain is more urgently needed than ever. The crisis in the Soviet Union has continued unabated, even in the short period since the special 19th Party Conference closed.

Gorbachev has returned from Poland to face a growing crisis of the nationalities in the Soviet Union. It was on the question of Stalin's chauvinist policies towards the nationalities in the USSR that Lenin and Trotsky first came together against an increasingly arrogant and narrow-minded bureaucracy. We have stressed the decisive significance of these historical questions in the unfolding crisis of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Our plans to intervene in crisis in the Soviet Union are well advanced and we hope in the near future to be able to provide Workers Press readers with first hand accounts of the developing political revolution in the USSR. Party members have responded with great generosity to our appeal for funds to make this possible. We are greatly encouraged by this response and believe it indicates what can be achieved by the struggle for a principled leadership in the working class. But we cannot allow this specific requirement to slow down the fight to achieve our £10,000 Fund. Without this money it will not be possible to sustain Workers Press, even in its present form, let alone the expanded form we must now strive for if we are to meet our political responsibilities. So do raise as much as you can for our Fund. Ask all friends and supporters of the movement to respond to the great events unfolding in the Soviet Union.

Geoff Pilling

All donations to: Workers Revolutionary Party PO Box 735 SW9 7QS

Patrick Slaughter - A Statement

IT HAS been drawn to our attention that one John Upton has been telling anybody in the Hull area that Patrick Slaughter is a fascist.

Upton is a member of the mis-named International Communist Party, a group that has led a systematic campaign of hate against the WRP in general and Cliff Slaughter (Patrick's father) in particular. Their sectarian hatred of the WRP has turned them into enthusiastic supporters of the police and the judges against the working class.

It is a basic question of working class morality that questions of racism, alleged and real, are not dealt with by the state but within the working class movement itself.

As we explained in last week's Workers Press, Patrick was one of five young men who received prison sentences after being found guilty of 'conspiracy' to cause affrays in and around football matches in the season 1986-87. The five were jailed under the same conspiracy laws that sent Shrewsbury building worker Des Warren to jail. Patrick has strenuously denied the police 'evidence' that he shouted racist abuse.

This 'evidence' was provided entirely by the police. Patrick made a statement in court before sentence that he had always regarded all forms of racism with abhorrence and had always been a consistent opponent of racialists and fascists. All those who have known Patrick for any length of time know that this statement is completely true, and several witnesses exposed the fraud of this 'evidence'.

We appeal to everybody in the Labour movement, whether they agree or not with the politics of the WRP, to reject the provocations of this sick little group of so-called 'Trotskyists'. Their methods, in which political slander replaces real struggle, have nothing to do with the working class movement.

Safety Last for North Sea Oil

NORTH Sea oil workers, instinctively, believe the allegations about safety conditions on the Piper Alpha rig where 166 men were killed so horrifically.

Linda Anderson, the friend of Craig Barclay who died in the explosion, said he phoned her 20 minutes before it, having been threatened with discipline for refusing to light welding equipment because he thought gas was present: the Occidental oil company denied this.

Workers will believe Linda Anderson.

The statement by Occidental's former safety chief, that he recommended the Piper Alpha be shut down for six weeks, to insert steel bulkheads between the modules to lessen the impact of a Gas explosion, and that this was not acted on, also rings true to all who know how the oil companies operate.

To those who don't know the oilfield, the disaster was shocking.

To North Sea workers it was not only shocking, but predictable, in a sense inevitable - not because they could forecast this particular disaster on this rig (although the especially blatant dangers there were apparent to some), but because the explosion was just an extreme result of the daily, endless, abuse.

The uninitiated would ask - why are men's living quarters right on top of such inherently unsafe installations? And the answer is easy - it's a question of saving money. This is the only factor which determines the degree of safety.

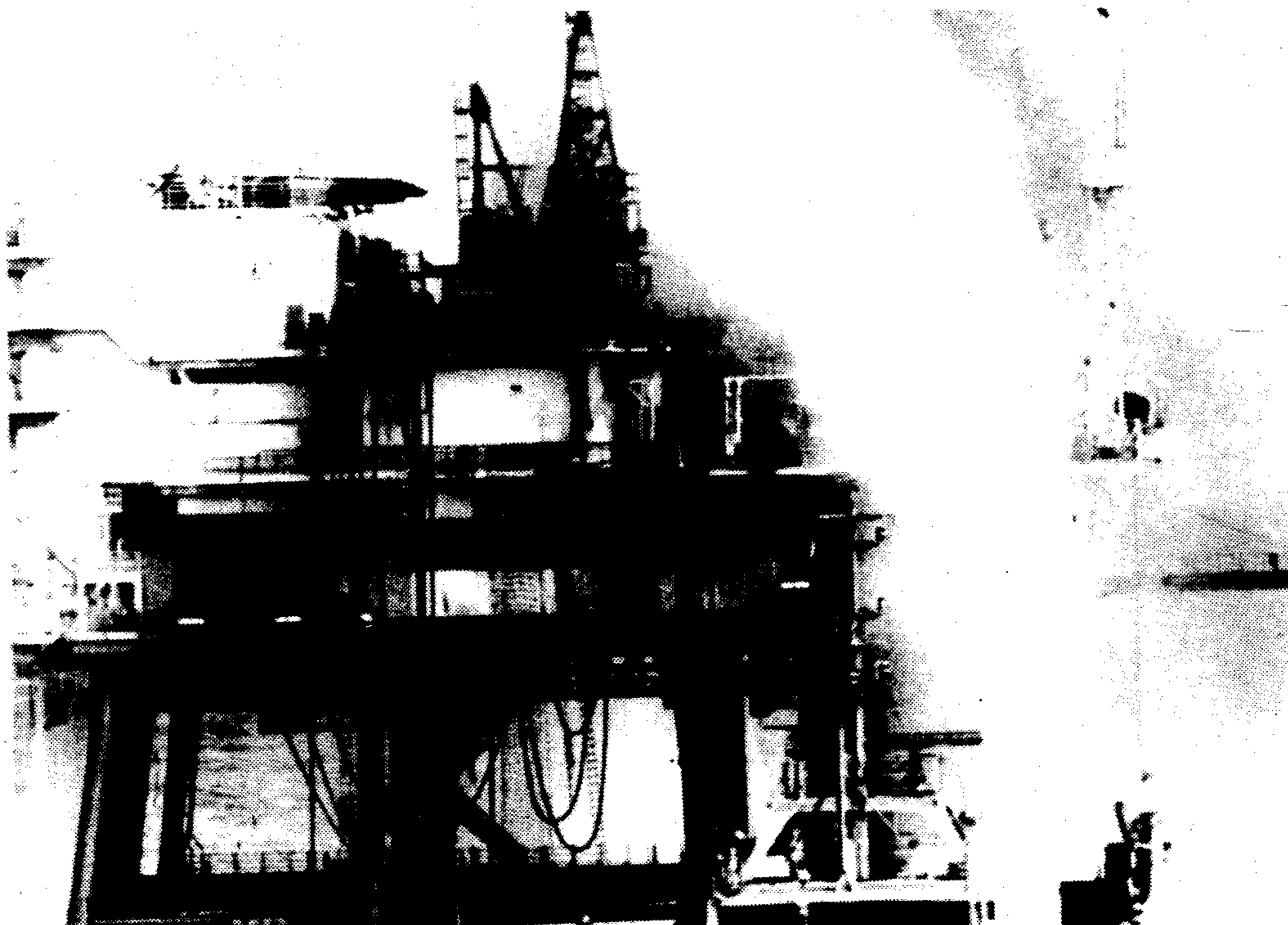
There are safety schemes on the rigs, like Shell's "Target Zero" scheme: the philosophy behind them is that accidents are preventable, and that it is workers themselves taking improper precautions that causes accidents. This philosophy ends up blaming the men.

With these schemes, with the cover-up of news, with clever public relations, the oil companies present an impression of a caring industry. Now this disaster has shown that the exact opposite is true. The companies talk about heroes who died, about heroes who saved themselves - but to them these "heroes" have always been dirt.

Central to the safety issue is the question of independent organisation of North Sea workers. To date, it has been the "responsibility" only of the oil companies and the Department of Energy - both of whom have a greater responsibility, to exploit the North Sea as cheaply and efficiently as possible.

On the rigs themselves, all responsibility for adopting safe working practices is shoved on to the men's backs - in an atmosphere where serious questioning of oil companies' or drilling contractors' decisions can lead to a worker being immediately run off the rig, and even driven out of the industry.

Industrial tribunals, and other machinery supposed to provide legal



A fire-fighting ship pumps water over an oil rig during a previous disaster

protection, are ineffective. The union organisation is too weak to protect men; so they stay quiet and suffer the iniquity of being blamed for the accidents.

From the earliest days, the oil companies fought might and main to keep the North Sea unorganised. It is the mainly American-owned contractors, who do exploration and production drilling, that have brutalised the North Sea, policed it on the oil companies' behalf, and done their dirty work (victimisations, sackings etc).

To effectively unionise the North Sea would mean taking on the might of these multi-national companies - a task not to the liking of the trade union bureaucracy, which is unable to defend a single section of its membership, or indeed itself, as the National Union of Seamen (NUS) strike shows.

The Inter-union Offshore Committee, the only trade union body with access to the rigs, is composed of full-time union officials and is consequently hopeless. If there is union organisation - on some large platforms for example - it is usually kept strictly within limits the companies tolerate.

Take the supply boat sector, which has been organised by the NUSD, and where workers have fought to defend jobs and conditions. The Dover P&O seamen were sacked, for attempting to defend conditions - the loss of which will make ferries still more dangerous than they were at the time of the Zeebrugge disaster; the North Sea supply boat men struck to support them; certain shipping companies, who work exclusively for the oil companies, sacked 90 of the men, and replaced them with untrained non-union labour imported from poor countries. No thoughts here of "safety

first"! And in fact the Piper Alpha's supply boats, at the time of the disaster, were crewed by these unskilled workers.

It's very easy for the oil companies, the government, royalty, and the other parasites who paraded themselves at the hospitals, to pay out compensation. Even the millions they pay out costs them less than it would to provide a safe working environment.

The whole question of safety must be taken out of their hands.

It's a question for the North Sea workers: it's in their interests and no-one else's, to fight for safety. Safety must be under their control; they must have access to the expertise, to the equipment, to the decisions. What we are talking about, of course, is workers' control of the industry.

The first step is to organise the North Sea workers. There have to be grave doubts as to whether the NUS - which is facing a new round of fines amounting to half a million pounds, with all but two of its offices completely out of business, and with sequestrators sitting in those two - is up to the job. The white-collar unions which organise in the north sea have also shown little success.

The misery and pain of the survivors, and families of men killed, won't be lessened by financial hand-outs, necessary as they are.

But they will gain some relief when they are satisfied that the industry has been made safer for succeeding generations of oil workers, because then the sacrifices won't have been completely in vain.

by a North Sea Worker

LETTERS

Leave the EETPU?

I wish to disagree strongly with the point of view expressed in the article, "Sparks fly over Hammond" (Workers Press, 2 July).

It reported a "Flashlight" conference in Manchester at which a resolution was passed by a two-thirds majority stating: "If the leadership of the EETPU persists in pursuing a policy of splitting the TUC and setting up a rival organisation then we will seek to find ways and means of remaining within the TUC as an organised bloc."

Just what this is to mean in practice is indicated in the statement: "Several stewards each representing hundreds of members declared their intention to recommend to their members leaving the EETPU and remaining in the TUC."

The article was derogatory of some speakers who opposed leaving the EETPU in the event of its expulsion by the TUC, and by implication concurred with the view of one speaker who put staying in the EETPU under such conditions as equivalent to joining the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM).

The question I would ask is, who has given "Flashlight" or anyone else the right to hand over the electricians' and plumbers' union to Hammond and the right-wing in perpetuity?

This is an organisation of 336,000 members who joined not because Hammond is its general secretary but because, historically, it is their relevant trade union.

As in the case of most unions they are members in spite of, not because of, its leadership.

There is no comparison with the UDM which was created from the beginning by scabs, for scabs alone.

Those in the EETPU opposing their leadership's betrayal of every basic principle of trades unionism should fight to rid it of the right wing.

Members of other unions should support them by ensuring its expulsion from the TUC and its barring from all other joint union bodies, giving added impetus to the battle to expunge all anti-union policies and drive those who have introduced them - to the extent that the EETPU can eventually be re-admitted to the TUC. There are precedents in the cases of Equity and COHSE.

For Trotskyists the TUC's policies are not the criteria for principled trade unionism. On the contrary, its refusal to fight the Tory anti-union laws but to operate within the closing circle of legality, is the other side of the coin from Hammond's acceptance of the Tory ideal of one-union deals and no-strike agreements.

In his article, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay", Trotsky makes the point that we cannot select the arena and the conditions for our activity - the fight for the complete independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state - to suit our likes and dislikes. We cannot remove the struggle even in fascist labour organisations.

He states: "Every organisation, every party, every faction which permits itself an ultimatic position in relation to the trade union, i.e. in essence turns its back upon the working class, merely because of displeasure with its organisations, every such organisation is destined to perish. And it must be said it deserves to perish."

Bernard Franks

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SOUTH AFRICA BULLETIN

NO. 1

Articles on the revolutionary
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from page 8

encouraging a split in CCAWUSA. Through a systematic campaign of harassment, including physical violence they have attempted to force the union into a merger with other COSATU affiliates in order to bureaucratically impose their political position. The COSATU leadership have recognised this rump union and CCAWUSA has been divided, with a large majority of its members now not recognised by COSATU.

In CCAWUSA's words "they have been evicted like common criminals from numerous COSATU meetings".

This battle now joined raises all the central questions of the South African revolution. This dispute is not confined to the catering union.

Within all the main COSATU affiliates the question of socialism or the bourgeois democracy of the Freedom Charter is posed. The Stalinists and petty bourgeois nationalists are now engaged in a desperate struggle to tie the insurgent black working class to the treacherous Freedom Charter - a charter which doesn't mention socialism but which guarantees Anglo American and others the freedom to continue its exploitation of the black proletariat.

As the working class surges forward it must deal with Bothas racist state but it must deal a mortal blow to Stalinism, as CCAWUSA says "we have to be vigilant at all times against attempts to divert our struggle away from socialism".

Within Mayekiso's Metal Workers' Union and the Miners Union there

is a conscious expression that apartheid and capitalism are interlinked and that the working class will have to deal with both. In the era of the Permanent Revolution the democratic tasks cannot be solved short of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

These are the most favourable conditions for building the Trotskyist vanguard party. In this battle against Stalinism the building of a Bolshevik party, as part of a reformed Fourth International will be decisive.

* Forward to the Permanent Revolution

* Build the Trotskyist party of South Africa

* Rebuild the Fourth International

Shoot to kill continues

SIR JOHN Hermon, Chief Constable of the RUC in the British-occupied six counties of Ireland, has announced that no prosecutions will be taken against 20 RUC officers involved in the shoot-to-kill conspiracy being operated by the RUC in Co Armagh in the autumn of 1982.

On the night of 11 November three unarmed members of the Provisional IRA were murdered in a hail of bullets just outside Lurgan, Co Armagh.

In the next five weeks three more unarmed men were shot in two separate incidents. Michael Tighe, a catholic teenager from Craigavon, had gone to a hayshed with a friend, Martin McCaughey, to examine some First World War rifles.

They were both shot in highly controversial circumstances in an apparent RUC stake-out near an alleged IRA explosives dump.

On 12 December, two unarmed members of the INLA - associates of Dominic McGlinchey - were murdered in Armagh city. A number of policemen were charged and acquitted.

During one of the trials, an RUC officer gave evidence that members of the RUC special branch had operated inside the Republic without permission. He also alleged he had been told by a senior officer to alter his evidence.

In an attempt to avoid the shoot-to-kill conspiracy becoming public knowledge, the government asked Hermon to appoint someone to investigate the allegations and, presumably, do a cover-up or PR job on it.

John Stalker, former Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, was appointed to carry out the investigation. His initial report was presented in September 1985. He was about to travel back to Belfast the following June in connection with the recording of the hayshed incident by members of the RUC task force when he was suspended from duty and subjected to disciplinary proceedings on charges unconnected with the investigation.

The Greater Manchester police authority later decided to take no further action against him on these "charges".

Colin Sampson, head of West Yorkshire police, who replaced Stalker, carried on the investigation, and handed his report to the north of Ireland's DPP, Sir Barry Haw.

His report on the Tighe case was submitted earlier, while a separate Sampson report dealt with the management of the RUC.

None of the Stalker/Sampson findings has been published.

Honest John Stalker probably thought too could whitewash the skulduggery of the sectarian and bigoted RUC.

The more he tried in his effort to cleanse the police-sewer, the more he realised how impossible this was.

When he discovered that the malpractices went to the top of the force, something had to be done to stop him exposing those responsible for organising and authorising the shoot-to-kill policy.

When he asked for a copy of the tape recording of the hayshed incident he was refused. He then threatened to quit the investigation and was subsequently told that he could have a copy.

It was now that his friendship with an alleged Manchester criminal was made known and he was duly removed from the 'investigation'.

Hermon himself, along with his two deputies McAtamney and Forbes, were only last week told there would be no further investigations into their role in the case.

Hermon's decision to take disciplinary action against the 20 police officers was based on a report by a Mr Charles Kelly, Chief Constable of Staffordshire police. He carried out an investigation of possible disciplinary charges against the officers, up to the rank of chief Superintendent.

Even the revered Ian Paisley denounced the decision to exempt the highest ranks of the police from further inquiry.

Paisley said that Mrs Thatcher, as head of the security forces, should bear the responsibility for any alleged shoot-to-kill policy.

In the light of the Thatcher government's refusal to bring any prosecutions on the spurious grounds of police interest and national security and the refusal of King to publish the Stalker/Sampson report, it is hardly surprising that the establishment should escape any censure or discipline in the shoot-to-kill investigation.

In the same way, what happened in Co Armagh in 1982, in Strabane in 1985, Loughall in 1987, Gibraltar in 1988 or Bloody Sunday in Derry, 1972 have never been, and never will be, answered. Lies, slander, cover-up and every other conceivable method of deception are used to defend and protect those who carry out these acts of terrorism and violence in Ireland, in the interests of capitalism.

The British working class has a duty to support the Irish people in their struggle against the British state.

As socialists, we must demand a labour movement inquiry into all these acts of tyranny.

We ignore the struggle of the Irish people at our peril. To support the struggle against the British state forces in the north of Ireland is to prepare the working class for the task of smashing the state in Britain itself.

CHARLIE WALSH

NEWS SHORTS

Expulsions

THE United States has expelled the Nicaraguan ambassador and seven of his staff, in retaliation for similar action against US diplomats from Managua. The Americans were told to leave after being accused of inciting anti-government protests in their efforts to unseat Sandinista president, Daniel Ortega, before Reagan is due to leave the White House in January next year. The expulsions are expected to be a prelude towards a resumption of US military aid to the Contra rebels.

South Africa

THE execution of the "Sharpsville Six" has again been postponed by the South African government. In what has been described as "an extraordinary political intervention", it was announced that the Six would be allowed to exhaust every legal remedy before being executed.

USA

67 YEAR-OLD Texan senator Lloyd Bentsen, described as a self-made millionaire, has been selected by Democratic presidential nominee, Michael Dukakis, as his running mate.

This appears to have upset Reverend Jesse Jackson, who, along with former astronaut John Glenn, was short-listed for the post.

There is speculation that Jackson's rejection may affect the black vote when polling-day comes around. Jackson, who gave a very poor impersonation of somebody not being upset when appearing at a press conference, had learned the news second-hand. He refused to endorse Bentsen and further declared that his own name would remain on the ballot for the presidential nomination at the Atlanta convention next week.

Strike or sick?

Greek air traffic controllers, who are forbidden to strike, are going sick instead. They are refusing to eat or sleep and thereby obtaining medical certificates declaring them unfit for work, a tactic which in the past has resulted in absenteeism of up to 80 per cent within the space of a week.

Children are people too

BEFORE the publication of the Butler-Sloss report last week no one could make an informed comment on the Cleveland affair, for the simple reason that no one knew the full facts.

But even now that the 320-page report is out there's still a lot we haven't been told. And the information we haven't been given - apparently because Lord Justice Butler-Sloss was unable to obtain it, heaven alone knows why - strikes me as absolutely crucial.

How many of the 121 children diagnosed by the Middlesbrough General Hospital paediatricians as sexually abused were in fact so abused? The report doesn't say, and we have no way of knowing.

What the report does make clear is that 14 of the children concerned definitely were abused, in quite horrible ways; but it doesn't say how many more of them were, nor how many of the fathers who made successful applications for the return of their children must be presumed guilty.

It also makes clear that Dr Higgs and Dr Wyatt used the anal dilatation test as the sole physical sign in only 18 cases out of 121 - and that in not a single case was it the only ground for the diagnosis.

No one concerned - no one at all, including the police, the gutter press, the MP Stuart Bell, and the paediatricians concerned - emerges

well from this affair. For when it comes to human rights, children are in our society at the absolute bottom of the heap.

Whatever rights they may enjoy in theory, in practice they have none. In at least one British city they can now be rounded up off the streets by police and carted away in vans, as if they were stray animals.

The Cleveland children were pawns in a sordid power struggle among a gaggle of competing bureaucratic interests, none of whom, for all their protestations, ever put the children's interests first.

Is it, for instance, putting the child's interests first to obtain a Place of Safety order from a magistrate at two in the morning and drag a terrified child from home to hospital in the middle of the night?

If we clear our minds of cant, we have to recognise that 'child sexual abuse' is a recently minted, and not altogether helpful, label for a whole spectrum of qualitatively diverse phenomena.

At one end of the scale is 'interference' so invasive, so cruel, so physically and psychologically damaging to the child, that the adults who practise it, often for years on end, are psychopaths who need to be kept well out of the way of children for the rest of their lives.

At the other end of the scale are innocent soporific maternal caresses of babies that in some cultures are regarded as perfectly acceptable and harmless, but in our own culture are normally inhibited by the powerful operation of the incest taboo.

On the whole it might be better if

we discarded the term 'child sexual abuse' and spoke simply of child abuse, by which I mean the infliction of pain or distress on children by adults.

Torture is torture, and a torturer whose activities happen to be a source of sexual gratification for himself is morally neither worse nor better than one who believes himself to be engaged in punishment.

Child abuse, of whatever kind, is always an abuse of power; and when it is perpetrated by a father it is an abuse of the power that has traditionally been given in our society to the head of the family.

The family, in bourgeois society, is traditionally a transmission belt for the inculcation of the state's dominant values and prejudices; and fathers are traditionally expected to play the role of sergeant-major, training their children to conform.

This can, and often does, lead to domestic tyranny and untold suffering and misery.

The sufferings visited on small children by selfish, unloving, tyrannical, or psychopathic parents are very much the business of the rest of society.

So far as they go, the Butler-Sloss recommendations are a step in the right direction. Most important of all is the recommendation that children be listened to. This applies to everyone involved, daily or exceptionally, in their care. What's more, children should have not only a voice but also a choice - a vote, as it were, in all decisions that affect them. In short they should be treated, not as property, but as people.

AS I SEE IT...



BY TOM OWEN

Joan Saluat-Papasseit

IT is the duty of Marxists to preserve and explore the cultural achievements of humanity. It is also a particular responsibility to uncover the "hidden history" of the struggles and achievements of the working class and socialist movement.

This month marks the 64th anniversary of the death of poet and political activist Joan Saluat-Papasseit. Born in the slums of Barceloneta, the docklands of Barcelona in 1894, Saluat led an impoverished childhood spending five years in the dock poorhouse after his father, a merchant sailor, died in mysterious circumstances.

He spent several years of his life in the poorhouse, prison and later in sanatoria suffering from tuberculosis.

In 1907 he began a career of casual labour as apprentice-statue maker, grocer's boy and later night watchman on the dock. In 1914 he became a member of the Juventud Socialista de Barcelona and joined the editorial staff of the journal, "Les Miserables".

He was a self-taught revolutionary inspired by the horror of contemporary injustice. He was sentenced to two

months imprisonment in 1916 for his political writings and his first writings "Gloas de un socialista" appeared under the pseudonym Gorkiano.

Then followed Humo de fabrica (factory smoke) in 1918.

Salva then found employment in a bookshop as manager of "Galries Loitanes" and his work abandons Castilian prose for mother tongue Catalan poetry. His work is lyrical and intimate but also influenced by Futurism and Cubism. In 1918 he married Carme Eleutenin and then there appeared the severe symptoms of tuberculosis, the disease that brought about his premature death.

The poet spent the rest of his life in illness and great physical agony dying on 16 August 1924.

His major work is OSSA/MENOR URSAMINOR 1919-1924 released posthumously in 1925, the pages of which were found under the pillow of his deathbed.

His verse is as well-known in Cataluyna as nursery rhymes. He is a major innovative European poet and it has been my privilege along with my colleague Dominic Kearn to bring his work to light through translation.

His work was suppressed under Fascist reaction. The following translation is taken from an illegal mimeographed version of the Catalan. It is a bitter denunciation of the Catalan bourgeois literati and a celebration of the struggle for existence.

Nocturn for Accordion
(for Josep Aragay)

Now then: I've watched wood on the wharf.

(You don't know
what it is
to watch wood on the
wharf:
but I've seen the rain
in buckets
drenching the boats,
and the coin of anguish shivering
beneath the timber;
beneath the flanders
and the pinewood,
beneath the sacred cedars.

When the armed squaddies spied on
the night
and the vault of the sky was a
tunnel
without the flare of carriages:
I have made a fire of shards in the
black throat of the wolf.
You don't know
what it is
to watch wood on the

wharf:
but all the hands of all the street
kids
met like a farandola
to swear an oath in the ring of my
fire.
And it was like a miracle
drawing out their stiff numb hands.

And in the fog each step was lost.

You don't know
what it is
to watch wood on the
wharf.
Neither do you know the prayer of
the ships' lights
- which are so many colours
like the sea beneath the sun:
which needs no sails.

MULTINATIONAL'S GREED DESTROYS OZONE LAYER

CANADIAN SCIENTISTS have now confirmed that a giant hole in the ozone layer is forming over the Arctic similar to that discovered eight years ago over the Antarctic.

As yet it is only half the size of the 5 million square-mile opening over the South Pole.

Present in all the atmosphere, ozone, a type of super oxygen, concentrates at levels of 12 to 20 miles above the earth where it absorbs more than 99 per cent of ultra-violet light rays, thus shielding all life on the planet from their lethal effects.

Ozone is continuously created and destroyed in nature but the balance has been dangerously disturbed by the impact of certain chemical industry creations; the chloro-fluoro-carbons (CFCs) and the Halons.

These are found in a vast range of cosmetic, domestic and industrial products, for example aerosol propellants, fire extinguishers, plastic packaging, insulation foams, refrigeration units and many solvents.

When these substances are released into the atmosphere - by spraying, by the break-up of refrigerators or by the decomposition of packages such as burger boxes - the 'chloro' aspect of CFC's unites with the ozone to form chlorine compounds which do not have the same ultra-violet absorption properties.

The ozone holes over the coldest regions of the globe (in the south threatening to extend over South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand) are not of constant size. They reach their maximum in late winter and spring, then contract in early summer, filling up from the surrounding layers.

But this action contributes to the world-wide general reduction of ozone - by perhaps three per cent over Europe and North America - believed to be resulting in a five per cent to seven per cent increase in cases of melanoma (skin cancer) and killing off plankton at a fast rate, the first vital link, as the primary food source, in the oceans' ecosystems.

Free-floating CFCs are also believed to be contributing to the 'greenhouse' effect, trapping sunlight sufficiently to raise the earth's temperature enough to melt the polar ice caps, with a consequent threat to low-lying coastal areas and cities such as Tokyo, New York and London as sea-levels rise. In September 1987, 30 nations signed the Protocol of Montreal, agreeing to reduce CFC production by half over the following decade.

Most environmentalists agree that this is useless, still leaving CFCs production at six times faster than the atmosphere can break them down, and leaving three

By Bernard Franks

times as much in the atmosphere by the year 2,000 as now.

What is needed, they say, is an immediate 85 per cent cut in the current 700,000 tonnes a year production, followed by a two to three year phase-out.

The main concern of the producing companies, however, has not been to cut production according to the needs of the situation, but to stall until safe substitutes are available and marketable. Du Pont, the world's largest producer of CFCs has agreed only to run down production 'by the early years of

next century'.

During this time it will hope to take out patents on new chemicals, out-manoeuvring its competitors and preventing them from producing similar substances.

The Thatcher government has been the main rearguard fighter against international agreements to restrict CFC production, anxious that Europe's largest producer, ICI, should not lose the race for alternatives or see its profits threatened meanwhile.

It is no exaggeration to say that leaving the decision to cut production to those who put free enterprise and market forces above all will lead to the premature deaths of millions of people throughout the world and irreparable damage to the planet's ecosystem over the next two decades.

Homelessness for disabled

PHYSICALLY and mentally handicapped people are suffering homelessness on a massive scale as a result of a callous Tory housing policy, according to a new Shelter report: 'Freedom to Lose: Housing Policy and People with Disabilities.'

It shows that disabled people have been the hardest hit under the government requirement on local authorities to sell off their housing stock. The public rental sector is the main provider of accommodation in terms of wheelchair and mobility housing, there having been since 1970 a statutory obligation on councils to consider the needs of handicapped people when formulating housing policy.

With the introduction of the government's sell-off requirements such provision has been decimated and the ability to meet such need in future is totally undermined. This has resulted in homelessness rising faster among disabled than for any other grouping, putting them in the front line against Tory policy. For example, in London between 1980 and 1986 homelessness for the physically disabled rose by 121 per cent and for the mentally ill and handicapped by 146 per cent, compared with a 70 per cent rise in general. Far worse will follow if pending legislation is passed opening up Section II housing to 'market forces'.

According to the report's author, Dr Jenny Morris, "The harsh values of survival of the fittest will receive a major boost when the Housing Bill currently going through parliament becomes law".

Disabled people are effectively barred by low incomes and outright poverty from buying their specially adapted council accommodation and certainly will not be able to compete for deregulated private accommodation.

Yet in the background is the threat that all remaining council properties will be sold off to private companies and landlords where current occupants are unable to buy. Such owners will be motivated only by profit. They will be interested only in letting to yuppies and desperate home seekers willing and able to pay.

Especially beneficial to the Tories in their introduction of policies which put this most vulnerable sector of the population on the street with a minimum of scandal has been the "invisibility" and hidden homelessness of people with disabilities. According to Dr Morris, "They do not appear in most of the major pieces of research on housing and indeed it is difficult to establish just what proportion of the population we are talking about". Various local surveys have suggested an average of 3.2 per cent of households with at least one disabled person.

In a society where free enterprise and market forces rule the problems of disabled people cannot be solved by charity, by appeals to reason or by reformism - the Labour opposition has not even made half a promise of reversing Tory deregulation or the public housing sell-off. Only under socialism can these problems be solved.

Workers Press

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Stalinism's Past Haunts Gorbachev

THE 19TH Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is over. But the crisis that forced Gorbachev to call it is far from over.

'Soviet Weekly' says the discussions 'prolonged and stormy' (like the applause was in conferences in the Stalin period).

But hardly had the storm died down than a new one opened. The Armenian-dominated parliament of Nagorny-Karabakh last week threw down a challenge to the Soviet central power by declaring for the secession of the region from Azerbaijan, and for moves towards transfer back to Armenia after an a 65 year interval.

Gorbachev will now have to decide whether to use force to assert the will of the Moscow bureaucracy or to give in to a demand that could open up the nationalities

question throughout the country.

A central theme of Gorbachev's opening speech was the urgent need to 'democratise' Soviet society. He made a call for increased power to the Soviets. Delegates took this up and the cry 'All Power to the Soviets' was heard from some delegates.

But the 'soviets' that now exist in the Soviet Union bear little or no resemblance to the Soviets brought into being during the preparations for 1917.

One of the main purposes of Stalinism was to strip the Soviets of their power and reduce them to a mere appendage of bureaucratic power.

Genuine Soviets will emerge only in the struggle of the working class against the bureaucracy. Such soviets will

undoubtedly arise in the coming period. And they will certainly have no place in them for the bureaucracy.

'Drive the bureaucracy out of the Soviets' is the slogan under which the working class will fight, not Gorbachev's fraudulent claim that he is 'democratising' the Soviets.

The nature of the Soviets, of the rights of nationalities underlines the fact that it is questions of the past as much as those of the present that haunt the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In his closing speech Gorbachev said: 'We have spent a lot of time coming to understand the society in which we live, to understand the past in which

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'Show me another man able to organise almost a model army within a single year and win the respect of military experts. We have such a man.' (V.I. Lenin, on Trotsky's role as architect and leader of the Red Army)