



## TRADE UNIONISM: THE WAY AHEAD

BY GEOFF PILLING

**THE TORY** government's decision to scrap the Training Commission marks a new stage in the crisis of the trade union movement in this country.

The Commission - staffed by union, employer and government representatives and supposedly responsible for 'training' throughout industry - will be replaced by an agency under the direct control of Secretary of Employment Norman Fowler.

The Thatcher government has again spelled out to the trade union bosses that it is prepared to recognise only the most servile 'unions', only with those 'leaders' whose sole purpose will be to discipline the work force to satisfy the thirst of the monopolies for more and more profit.

### Clear

Immediately following Fowler's announcement, a number of such leaders made clear that they were prepared to work hand-in-glove with this new agency which will step up the introduction of cheap labour schemes and compulsory work programmes for the unemployed.

Not only electricians' leader Eric Hammond and engineering union leaders Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird but those who voted for the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC said they would be prepared to take part in the new arrangements.

TUC general secretary Norman Willis bleated about the Tory government's 'gross over-reaction' to the decision taken by the TUC at Bournemouth for a phased withdrawal from the Employment Training programme.

What are the lessons of this latest act of servile capitulation?

First, that the more the Tories kick the union leaders in the teeth the more desperately they cling to the capitalist state. The TUC never wanted to break with the scab EETPU nor with the host of state bodies on which these well-paid leaders sit with the government and the employers.

That was clear at Bournemouth. Kinnock spoke for the trade union leaders as a whole when he pleaded for a continuation of collaboration with the Tory Employment Training programme.

### Cowards

Nor did these cowards want to expel Hammond and his scab union. They did so only under intense pressure from the ranks of the unions who again showed their fighting spirit in the postworkers' strike.

This strike was as much a strike against the leadership of the union as it was against the Post Office.

The Tories have made clear what sort of unions they want. The trade union leaders have by their deeds shown that they are prepared to collaborate with the Tories in their brutal attacks on the working class and its organisations.

The question for the working class is: what sort of unions are now required to defend their interests against a mounting Tory attack on all fronts: against wages, the health service, against the unemployed, the sick and the elderly?

### Different

One thing is sure: the type of trade unionism now needed will be radically different from that represented by the present labour leaders, whether they call themselves 'right' or 'left'.

First, unions that serve the interests of the working class, must break entirely from all collaboration with the capitalist state, whatever government is in office.

Second, such unions must be controlled completely by their members who must have power to remove any leaders who fail to serve the interests of the working class.

Third, the unions now required by the working class must aim to break down all divisions in the working class, in particular the division between the employed and unemployed. This division is being used by the Tories to weaken the working class as a whole.

Fourth, this new type of trade unionism must take up interests on

behalf of the working class not merely in Britain but throughout the world.

The attack on trade unionism is not a British matter but one for workers throughout the world.

In particular such unions must fight actively for support for the South African working class and its unions who are facing the same fundamental problems as the British working class.

More and more workers are realising that the existing unions are becoming increasingly exhausted as instruments of struggle for the working class.

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# Workers Press

## Policing the Polish working class

THE resignation of the government of Zbigniew Messner, accepted by the 'Sejm' - the Polish parliament - last Monday, graphically expresses the desperate crisis of the Stalinist bureaucracy and of its conception of 'Socialism in one country.'

A report from the Sejm's Economic Commission had blamed the government for the rapidly worsening economic situation, and for last month's strike wave. Only 'deep changes in the composition of the government can restore confidence,' it said.

Ruefully accepting the role of scapegoat, the Prime Minister told the Sejm 'It will solve many problems.' It is doubtful whether anyone believed him. They know in any case that the role of the Polish government is to carry out the decisions of the military-bureaucratic apparatus.

The bureaucracy is caught between the two historical great forces: the working class and world capital.

Poland has been well to the fore in getting massive loans from the international bankers. The job of the bureaucracy is to police the Polish working class on behalf of the money-men, to ensure the servicing of this huge burden of debt.

This work involves the unsuccessful attempt to smash the class movement which expressed itself in the rise of Solidarity seven years ago (Incidentally it was also the background to the sale of scab coal to assist Thatcher's battle against the British miners.)

Now Jaruzelski is enlisting the church and the Walesa wing of Solidarity, which is now its instrument in a new effort to tame the working class. Walesa was personally involved in bringing the August wave of strikes to an end.

All his authority was used to carry this out, and he earned himself the right to direct talks with Jaruzelski.

Like that facing his fellow bureaucracy throughout the Eastern bloc, Jaruzelski's task is an impossible one.

The inevitable connections between Poland and world economy force their way through all bureaucratic barriers.

The old style of controls have proved unworkable and some kind of 'reconstruction' has to be imposed. But this meets the resistance of a still powerful worker's movement. There can be no way forward for Polish socialists except along the road of workers' control of the economy, the removal of the corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, and the integrated socialist planning of the economy on a European and a world scale.

This means breaking with the reactionary conception of 'People's democracy' and 'Socialism in a single country' on which the regime has been based ever since it was bureaucratically imposed in 1947. Polish workers need a leadership which begins from the requirements of the international working class. Only the Fourth International can provide such leadership - uniting the workers of Eastern Europe and the USSR with those of both the old imperialist countries and the newly industrialised countries.

The Preparatory Committee, with its establishment of a permanent centre for the rebuilding of the Fourth International, is directly engaged in this work.

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'IF WE do go out and raise this fund we will not break our necks. But if we do not go out and raise it we most certainly will break our necks.'

That was the way a member of our Central Committee explained our struggle for the necessary finance for the international centre and Workers Press. This is correct.

It is also correct for the struggle to rebuild the Fourth International in line with the struggles of masses of workers and youth for the political revolution in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the social revolution in the capitalist countries and those dominated by imperialism. Nothing will deter us from this task.

Our meeting on 9, October (see advert) will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Fourth International. It will also analyse its history and set out the tasks of today.

Campaign for the success of our meeting and raise the fund to carry forward our work. We have only one week to raise the outstanding £2,490.16 so hurry, hurry.

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## Simon Pirani answers Charlie Walsh

('For and Against', in Workers Press no. 131, 10 September 1988)

COMRADE Charlie Walsh (Workers Press, 10 September) says we cannot be for and against something at the same time. I say, we should base ourselves on the contradictions in that 'something'.

We Trotskyists are for the IRA against British imperialism, for the black youth who react violently against British police violence, and for the ANC guerrillas who fight the Botha regime.

This applies particularly when we are taking up the fight in the British working class against the pro-imperialist Labour leaders, who hand a monopoly of violence to imperialism - in the name of 'opposition to all violence'.

But this is not the end of the matter. We are for the violence of the oppressed - because we are Trotskyists and internationalists; we know that as the world socialist revolution develops, it will take the form of that violence. But equally, we know that without a leadership which bases itself on a scientifically-worked-out understanding of that world revolution, the struggles of the oppressed - however violent and however courageous - will suffer setbacks, and even end in betrayal and defeat.

This lesson has been written in the blood of thousands of workers; we are not going to keep quiet about it.

So we are for the violence of the IRA against British imperialism, and for a Trotskyist, internationalist perspective against a nationalist and guerrilla-ist one.

Wasn't Marx against the anarchist illusions of some leaders of the Paris Commune, and indeed tactically opposed to launching that struggle in the way and at the time that it was done - but for the Commune against French reaction, in fact its foremost public defender? And wasn't James Connolly for the Irish Volunteers against Britain, but against their leaders' nationalist perspective and in favour of the working-class perspective of the Irish Citizen Army?

Comrade Charlie specifically mentioned the guerrilla attacks of the IRA on the British army. We are for these, because they strike blows at the British state, which is our main enemy. But at the same time we are for a socialist perspective of mobilising the working class, as opposed to nationalist and guerrilla-ist ideas. The Republicans' guerrilla-ism sees the oppressed people as a 'sea' in which the guerrilla 'fish' swims; we oppose this because we see the working class as the motive force of revolution, not a passive back-up for heroic armed fighters.

In building the Fourth International, we have not to comment neutrally on military questions, but develop our attitude to them, starting with a study of the writings of the great communists, which show how their military strategies were based on their political conceptions: those of Connolly and Lenin, and above all of Trotsky whose five volumes of military writings show how he led the Red Army which terrorised the entire European bourgeoisie. Also 'The Red Army' by Erich Wollenberg (published by New Park) is very valuable.

We must talk about these military questions with great seriousness. For example, comrade Wayne Poulsen (Workers Press, 17 September) referred to the ANC leaders' denunciation of attacks on 'soft' targets. We must explain to our readers the ANC's military policy as a whole, and how this is based on their Stalinist politics; also the attitude of Trotskyists, and those socialists who we support against Stalinism, to the military questions that come up in the South African revolution.



## News briefs . . .

### Mexican death squads

THERE has been a series of politically motivated killings since the July elections, where the left-wing FDN (National Democratic Front) emerged as the first opposition of any significance to the uninterrupted 60-year reign of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party).

Although the allegation has been denied by Mexican authorities, it seems to be over-stretching coincidence that at least seven of the victims have been leading members of the FDN, now reckoned to be the second largest political force in Mexico.

### Teachers undervalued

THE GOVERNMENT were to blame for the 'collapse in morale and career prospects' amongst newly-qualified teachers, only 60 per cent of whom enter the profession, says Jack Straw, Labour Education spokesman. 'Good teachers cost money,' and the Education Secretary knew this, he went on. Which is why Kenneth Baker is paying them five per cent more than any other local education authority can afford, in his 'favoured' City Technology Colleges.

### Women's refugees under attack

THE INTRODUCTION of social security changes earlier this year has already undermined the running of Women's Aid refuges, which offer escape and protection from domestic violence to over 20,000 women and children each year.

There are scarcely 200 such refuge groups in England, representing about a quarter of that recommended by the 1975 Select Committee on Violence in Marriage.

Under the new proposals, if implemented, women living in refuges will have to claim housing benefit and income support, neither of which allows any contribution towards care provision.

### Fourth

ONE OF the findings of a two-year study by independent health experts is that Britain, as well as having fallen behind the rest of Europe in preventing heart diseases, strokes and infant deaths, also trails behind 'Third World' countries such as Chile, Brazil and the Gambia, in immunisation against measles and similar illnesses.

### Police news (I)

THREE prisoners escaped from Bury St Edmunds police station in Suffolk. They were watching television and 'lured' three

# THE TORTUOUS BURMESE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

BY CHRIS DIXON

**BURMA is in turmoil. The military took some sort of control in the capital Rangoon this week, but the uprisings which have begun will not be so easily put down. All that is certain is that the old regime - which has lasted 26 years - is gone for good.**

These events can be understood in relation to the country's colonial experience and its present position in the world economy.

One of the poorest countries in the world, Burma has been cut off from the world economy - one of the last countries without Coca Cola and selling little on the world market.

Burma's recent isolation is a far cry from its position in the 1930s, when Burma was the source of most of Britain's oil and a number of vital minerals. It was the world's largest exporter of rice, a source of teak and a wide range of precious stones.

Cabinet papers show Britain was more worried about holding onto its richest jewel, Burma, than India itself. Burma was separated from India in 1937 largely to protect British investments there.

Burma's colonial history began with one of Britain's bloodiest

annexations. It had one of the strongest national movements, fueled by the impact of the interwar slump. The symbols of the 1930s movement have reappeared today in the hands of young people who have known only the regime established by Ne Win in the 1960s.

Britain was forced to give up Burma in 1948 after the country was paralysed by a general strike. Britain could not afford to rebuild the economy wrecked by Britain and Japan's wartime 'scorched earth' policy.

There was nothing left in Burma that Britain wanted, and Britain turned attention elsewhere and meanwhile developed brutal policies to obtain oil from the Middle East, and other products from Malaysia.

The independence movement had won a country with devastated mines and oilfields and the port of Rangoon, shattered rail and road links. The government controlled little of the country. The minority peoples were irate at the broken promises of national rights made to them by Britain in return for help against the Japanese. Large parts of the upland areas remain untaxed and even uncounted in the periodic censuses to this day.

Burma has one of the largest armies in the world. They boast that they have been fighting 'insurgents' since 1948. In other words, they have been unsuccessfully trying to take control of a country which has been anarchic for 40 years.

The Burmese Communist Party, numerically strong like many others in Asia in the 1940s, launched an insurrection in 1949. There are still armed Stalinist guerillas, but their leadership was weakened by splits between pro-Moscow and pro-Peking factions.

The opposition parties to which the masses look today have little to offer except a focus for their dissatisfaction with years in which economic growth has been minimal and unemployment and under-employment have grown.

Since 1963, Burma under Ne Win pursued a lone path, with some nationalisation and centralised planning. He spoke of the 'Burmese road to socialism', and in some ways the country was more equitable than other Asian countries. But Burma suffered economic stagnation, inefficiency state marketing, corruption and an unrepresentative and repressive government.

The bourgeois democratic opposition which plans to head off the demands of the masses uses the authority of former leaders, including U Nu, now 81, who ran the country from independence until Ne Win's 1963 coup.

Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of a nationalist leader murdered in 1947 symbolises the fighting tradition and could be used as a popular cover.

There has been pressure in recent years to bring developments closer to those of the rest of the world. In fact this has meant importing not just recession, but the seeds of revolutionary upsurges which are rocking the previously 'stable' regimes throughout Asia.

The students have been the most active and organised force in Burma. Burmese 'socialism' meant progress in literacy and education, but no career prospects for graduates.

In the short term the military may appear in the ascendant. They have clamped down on a press which has tasted freedom. But outside Rangoon, local forms of government are emerging - not soviets, but councils which look back to earlier traditions, some Buddhist, some which flourished in the early years of independence.

More important, they continue to provoke courageous demonstrations in the streets. The people are finding their feet. They are largely without leadership and orientation - and their ultimate fate is closely connected to the development of revolution in the rest of the world.

policemen into the room, locked them in and escaped in a waiting car.

### Police news (II)

A 14-YEAR old boy, driving a car and caravan in tow, was stopped on suspicion of theft along the A40 near Beaconsfield. While the police were questioning the other occupants of the car, the young suspect drove off in the panda car where he had been placed.

An officer fell over while giving chase. He had to be treated for cuts and bruises.

### Stony ground

THE FUND-raising talents of discredited televangelist Jim Bakker, 'the best religious beggar of the 20th century', booted out by his ministry 18 months ago, would appear to have deserted him.

He failed last week to come up with the \$3m 'earnest money' on his pledge to pay \$172m demanded by the bankruptcy trustees.

Bakker's wife, Tammy, poured out her heart to their former followers in a letter of appeal recently. But the lack of forthcoming donations indicates that their pockets were unmoveable.

As well as the PTL television ministry, Bakker was responsible for the creation of Heritage USA, a South Carolina religious resort, once said to be third most popular theme park in the US.

Workers Revolutionary Party/Preparatory Committee

## 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

### MEETING IN GLASGOW

Sunday 23 October  
1pm

Blythswood Hotel  
320 Argyle Street  
Glasgow

### PUBLIC MEETING IN EAST LONDON

SUNDAY 2 October  
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## FROM THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES

## LEON TROTSKY ON THE PROBLEMS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

In April 1939, a few months after the Founding Conference of the Fourth International, C.L.R. James, [1] who had been a delegate there, discussed with Trotsky in Mexico. He later wrote up his notes of these discussions, and published them in the International Bulletin of the US Socialist Workers Party. They are reprinted in full in 'Writings of Leon Trotsky [1938-39]', pp249-266.

Bearing in mind the profound differences between the world situations then and now, the extracts we present here are of great importance in understanding the task of reconstructing the Fourth International today. In particular, Trotsky's explanation of the relation between the responsibilities of the revolutionaries and the objective conditions in which they fight deserves careful consideration

...THE question why we are not progressing in correspondence with the value of our conceptions, is not so meaningless as some friends believe. We are not progressing politically. Yes, it is a fact, which is an expression of a general decay of workers' movements in the last fifteen years. It is the more general cause.

When the revolutionary movement in general is declining, when one defeat follows another, when fascism is spreading over the world, when the official 'Marxism' is the most powerful organisation of deception of the workers, and so on, it is an inevitable situation that the revolutionary elements must work against the general historic current, even if our ideas, our explanations, are as exact and as wise as one can demand.

But the masses are not educated by prognostic theoretical conception, but by general experiences of their lives. It is the most general explanation - the whole situation is against us. There must be a turn in the class realisation, in the sentiments, in the feelings of the masses; a turn which will give us the opportunity for a large political success.

I remember some discussions in 1927 in Moscow after Chiang Kai-Shek stilled the Chinese workers [2]. We predicted this ten days before and Stalin opposed us with the argument that Borodin was vigilant, that Chiang Kai-Shek would not have the chance to betray us, etc. I believe that it was eight or ten days later that the tragedy occurred, and our comrades expressed optimism because our analysis was so clear that everyone would see it and we would be sure to win the party.

I answered that the strangulation of the Chinese revolution is a thousand times more important for the masses than our predictions. Our predictions can win us some few intellectuals who take an interest in such things, but not the masses. The military victory of Chiang Kai-Shek will inevitably provoke a depression and this is not conducive to the growth of a revolutionary faction.

Since 1927 we have had a long series of defeats. We are like a group who attempt to climb a mountain and who must suffer again and

again a downfall of stone, snow, etc. In Asia and Europe is created a new desperate mood of the masses. They heard something analogous to what we say from the Communist Party and they are pessimistic. That is the general mood of the workers. It is the most general reason.

We cannot withdraw from the general historic current - from the general constellation of forces. The current is against us, that is clear. I remember the period between 1908 and 1913 in Russia. There was also a reaction. In 1905 we had the workers with us - in 1908 and even in 1907 began the great reaction.

Everybody invented slogans and methods to win the masses and nobody won them - they were desperate. In this time the only thing to do was to educate the cadres and they were melting away. There was a series of splits to the right or to the left or to syndicalism and so on. Lenin remained with a small group, a sect, in Paris, but with confidence that there would be new possibilities of a rise. It came in 1913. We had a new tide, but then came the war to interrupt this development.

During the war there was a silence as of the grave. The Zimmerwald conference [3] was a conference of very confused elements in its majority. In the deep recesses of the masses, in the trenches and so on, there was a new mood, but it was so deep and terrorised that we could not reach it and give it an expression.

That is why the movement seemed to itself to be very poor and even this element that met in Zimmerwald, in its majority, moved to the right in the next year, in the next month. I will not liberate them from their personal responsibility, but still the general explanation is that the movement had to swim against the current.

Our situation is incomparably more difficult than that of any other organisation at any other time, because we have the terrible betrayal of the the Communist International, which arose from the betrayal of the Second International. The degeneration of the Third

International developed so quickly and so unexpectedly that the same generation which heard its formation now hears us, and they say: 'But we have already heard this once!'

Then there is the defeat of the Left Opposition in Russia. The Fourth International is connected genetically to the Left Opposition; the masses call us Trotskyists. 'Trotsky wishes to conquer power, but why did he lose power?' It is an elementary question. We must begin to explain this by the dialectic of history, by the conflict of classes, that even a revolution produces a reaction.

Max Eastman [4] wrote that Trotsky places too much value on doctrine and if he had more common sense he would not have lost power. Nothing in the world is so convincing as success and nothing so repelling as defeat for the large masses.

You have also the degeneration of the Third International on the one side and the terrible defeat of the Left Opposition with the extermination of the whole group. These facts are a thousand times more convincing for the working class than our poor paper with even the tremendous circulation of 5000 like the 'Socialist Appeal'.

We are in a small boat in a tremendous current. There are five or ten boats and one goes down and we say it was due to bad helmsmanship. But that was not the reason - it was because the current was too strong. It is the most general explanation, and we would never forget this explanation in order not to become pessimistic - we, the vanguard of the vanguard.

Then this environment creates special groups around out banner. There are courageous elements who do not like to swim with the current - it is their character. Then there are intelligent elements of bad character who were never disciplined, who always looked for a more independent tendency and found our tendency, but all of them are more or less outsiders from the general current of the workers' movement. Their value inevitably has its negative side. He who swims against the current is not connected with the masses.

Also, the social composition of every revolutionary movement in the beginning is not of workers. It is the intellectuals, or semi-intellectuals, or workers connected with the intellectuals, who are dissatisfied with the existing organisations...

We have comrades who came to us, like Naville [5] and others, fifteen or sixteen or more years ago when they were young boys. Now they are mature people and their whole conscious life they have had only blows, defeats and terrible defeats on an international scale, and they are more or less acquainted with this situation.

They appreciate the correctness of their conceptions and they can analyse, but they never had the capacity to penetrate, to work with the masses and they have not acquired it...

## NOTES.

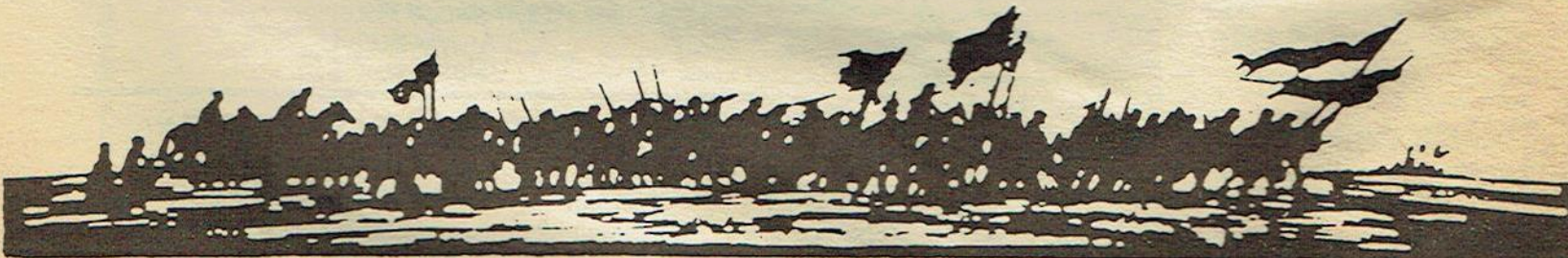
[1] C.L.R. James, who still lives in this country, came here from Trinidad in the 1930s and in 1938 published his book 'World Revolution'. Trotsky described the book as 'very good', but was highly critical of some aspects of James' method in it. James later abandoned Trotskyism.

[2] In 1926 Mikhail Borodin was sent by the Comintern to China as adviser to the nationalist Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-Shek. On the orders of Stalin and Bukharin, he worked to prevent the Chinese communists from establishing an independent revolutionary leadership for the working class. In April 1927, Chiang ordered a massacre of the Shanghai workers and their communist leaders, as the Opposition had predicted.

[3] In September, 1915, socialists who refused to accept the decision of the Second International to back their 'own' rulers in the imperialist war, met in Zimmerwald, in Switzerland. The majority of those who attended were centrists, but the Zimmerwald Left included some of the forces who later formed the Third International.

[4] Max Eastman (1883-1969) sympathised with Trotsky's opposition to Stalin, and translated several of Trotsky's books. He rejected dialectical materialism and later became an extreme anti-communist.

[5] Pierre Naville (1904- ) was a French Trotskyist from the 1920s. He left the Fourth International during the war.





# Dangers for Namibia

BY DOT GIBSON

**THE SOUTH West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) is widely recognised as the only legitimate representative of the struggle for independence of the Namibian people. It has led thousands of workers and youth in armed struggle for this cause.**

Because they do not want to weaken the South African revolution many socialists will not criticise the SWAPO leadership. This is dangerous because it builds up false 'internationalism' on the basis of unquestioning 'solidarity' which allows the Stalinists to betray these struggles and prevents a real discussion to clarify the common international tasks.

Workers Press invites a discussion on this false conception of internationalism as part of the preparation for the International Conference of Trotskyists to rebuild the Fourth International - founded 50 years ago as the outcome of the Left Opposition's struggle against Stalinism.

Every socialist and anti-apartheid fighter must speak out against SWAPO's offer of 'forgive and forget' to the Botha regime. This is the clearest sellout of the South African revolution, conjured up by the Stalinist bureaucracy on the one side and US imperialism on the other.

The summit talks between Gorbachev and Reagan were a conspiracy against the international working class in the interests of peaceful co-existence between US imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy's 'socialism in one country'.

And Margaret Thatcher's statement following her Moscow visit that 'Gorbachev understands British concerns for security in southern Africa' expressed this conspiracy.

Let us look at the situation in which SWAPO offers the hand of friendship to South Africa. The Botha regime is under siege: at home it faces continued militancy from the black working class who will not be subdued despite more than two years under a state of emergency; its army is being defeated by the Angolan masses

assisted by the Cuban army; in Mozambique it is sowing chaos; and in the rest of Southern Africa it is waging destabilisation campaigns.

These are costly and difficult to maintain, especially when the overall economic and political crisis makes it impossible for the South African state to continue to fight on so many fronts at home and abroad.

## Heroic fight

The heroic fight of SWAPO is an important part of this pressure on the South African capitalist state. SWAPO claimed that South Africa would not grant Namibian independence because of its need for a buffer between itself and its hostile neighbours; that the South African government feared that Namibia would be a base for the African National Congress (ANC); that the South African government would not want to provide for the expropriated rich landowners in an independent Namibia.

For their part SWAPO said it would fight for liberation and an end to apartheid as the same fight; it inspired thousands to continue the armed struggle until South Africa was free too.

Writing in 1981 SWAPO set out some of the reasons for South African domination of Namibia economically, politically and militarily.

Namibia is both a source of cheap raw materials and a captive market for South African goods, providing South Africa with R300 million per annum and saving R40 million on its import bill.

SWAPO claimed that independence would lose South Africa about R250 million in income and increase its import bill by R150 million. Economic domination is enforced by military means which also control the transportation systems needed by landlocked countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe.

SWAPO then concluded that control of Namibia via a puppet government installed by an internal settlement would allow South Africa to carry out its strategy of a 'common market' in southern Africa with itself as the dominant partner at the point of a gun.

Yet SWAPO is now offering the South African bourgeoisie the very protection of those interests which it used to decry. Is SWAPO saying that it will fulfil the role of that 'puppet government'? Following the Gorbachev-Reagan summit the Angolan government

was forced to arrive at a settlement with South Africa, Cuban armed forces were withdrawn and this sealed the fate of SWAPO.

It will get no support for continued armed struggle if it continues to wage guerilla warfare. SWAPO is now offering to be a 'good neighbour' to the apartheid regime.

It says if it becomes the government of an 'independent' Namibia it will deny bases to the ANC, it will preserve the economic interests of South African capitalism to continue to exploit Namibian workers; it will allow the rich landowners to keep their land (the best in the country).

It has expressed its willingness to lay down arms even before the Botha regime has offered to deal with it in relation to Namibia's independence let alone on South African apartheid.

How then does SWAPO differ from the 'puppet government' it was refusing to allow South Africa to install? It has the added advantage of offering legitimacy to the continued domination of South African imperialism by being the 'only legitimate representative of the struggle for Namibian independence'.

Can any socialist now say that criticism of SWAPO will split the struggle for independence? Its Stalinist and bourgeois-liberal supporters worldwide want it to settle down and it is going along with this collaborationist policy which beheads the struggle of the Namibian and South African people for independence.

## Break from nationalism

Fear of the new forces which have joined the arena of struggle is the most important factor in SWAPO's decision to settle now on terms favourable to itself and the South African bourgeoisie. The organised working class of Namibia is breaking with nationalism; together with young militants and students it has formed an alliance with the militant black workers of South Africa.

The working class is organising as never before in Namibian history: the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) has growing support in key industries.

This year, 40,000 school students boycotted school for four months in protest against South African Defence Force (SADF) bases next to their schools. More than half of

the country's 150,000 workers went on strike nationally to support them (some mines admitted total walkout).

To carry through the policy of peaceful co-existence, SWAPO must stem this tide of militancy sweeping the country. It therefore pre-empts the development of that struggle by selling out now, whilst it can still fool the people that it is the only viable government for them.

## Forgive and forget

But it will not be able to justify this 'forgive and forget' policy to the families of the hundreds of workers who have died in the Namibian mines, to the thousands starved by the cheap labour system (the 'better paid' mineworkers get only R80 per week) or the students whose schools are bombed regularly by the SADF, and the unemployed (60 per cent of the workforce).

South Africa cannot afford to open up yet another front in the townships of Namibia. Rather than risk losing all, it offers to share power with a toothless petty bourgeois government, whom it can continue to dominate economically and intimidate militarily, and with whom it shares its fear of the rising black working class.

This way 'everyone' is happy: SWAPO keeps its 'liberation movement' cloak and shelters South African and world imperialism under it; South African imperialism keeps its wealth; SWAPO becomes the government.

But what of the Namibian masses? Doubtless they will wish to know in whose name SWAPO has permitted white landowners to keep the best land in Namibia, the South African bourgeoisie to keep all the industries and mineral wealth of Namibia, the South African government to retain Walvis Bay with its rich fishing industry as part of South Africa.

For the Namibian working class there is only one way forward for independence. It must unite with the South African working class to defeat the schemes of SWAPO, Botha, the Stalinist bureaucracy of the USSR and Cuba and US imperialism.

In the rising struggles of the African masses new leaders are coming forward who represent the struggle for socialism.

Moses Mayekiso is now on trial in South Africa for this reason. The Fourth International has common cause with these fighters for socialism.





# Pablo Neruda

## AS I SEE IT

BY  
TOM OWEN

ON 11 September 1973 the Chilean armed forces, with the open connivance of the CIA, established the guerrilla regime of General Pinochet in a bloody counterrevolution. Salvador Allende, president of the Popular Front government, died in the ruins of the Moneda Palace, as later died thousands of workers and militants.

On 23 September that year, Pablo Neruda, regarded by many as the greatest Latin American poet of this century, died of cancer on his island retreat of La Isla Negra. The right-wing troops who ransacked his home in search of valuables found nothing more than a few curios and a vast collection of sea-shells.

His funeral became the occasion for the first public demonstration against the regime.

Neruda, born Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto in southern Chile in 1904, the son of a railway worker and a schoolteacher, established a world literary reputation. His 'public' honours include the Nobel prize for literature and the Stalin Peace Prize. He is regarded by the left as the poetic voice of the South American revolution and is compared in stature to John Milton, Walt Whitman or Vladimir Mayakovsky.

For us, Neruda's political career is less distinguished. Described as 'a man of all seasons' of the left, his early populism accommodated itself perfectly to popular frontism in Spain and Chile.

He openly joined the Chilean Communist Party in 1945 and was unswerving in his loyalty to the Soviet bureaucracy through all its tortuous shifts and betrayals. Even from the security of his literary eminence, he never once interceded for the persecuted Soviet and eastern European intelligentsia, many of whom he must have been familiar with or known personally.

At the end of his life, he was to stand for the CP in the Chilean presidential elections, but withdrew in favour of Allende, who sent him to Paris as the Chilean ambassador. In the last weeks of his life, his political dreams and hopes lay in ruins in the rubble of the Maneda Palace.

This having been said, Neruda's literary work does not fall easily into the simplistic prescriptions of Stalinist political policing of the arts.

Neruda was a prolific poet of unmistakable originality and extraordinary range. The lyrical, the erotic, the fantastic as well as the public and the political are equally sources of his inspiration and the themes of his work. He is also a mature poet of great richness and variety. Some may well ask if the dead hand of Stalinism had perverted his politics, to what extent did it curb and limit his poetic achievement?

This is a legitimate question. I do not believe there is a simple answer. Some critics have argued in detail that the verse of the Spanish revolutionary period (1936-39) is

vitiated by the requirements of republican Popular Front propaganda. However, the relationship between artistic and political consciousness is complex and uneven.

Trotsky's formulation in 1924 that 'artistic creativity, by its very nature, lags behind the other modes of expression of the spirit', is valuable here in that it suggests that in our epoch there is a necessary distance between political and artistic consciousness and practice.

Put another way, there are no guarantees that people with a 'correct' political line necessarily create great poetry or vice versa. In the case of Neruda, we are dealing with the political ideology of Stalinism and we have to claim that it is possible for artistic-literary labour to penetrate and subvert it as a form of the degeneration of Marxism under the pressure of imperialism.

At this level we have to ask how far does Neruda's work, however impressive, penetrate or break out of the false consciousness of Stalinism.

We can explain certain special features of Neruda's development which allowed for a relatively autonomous development free from the bureaucratic interventions which regimented or corrupted many European contemporaries. Most of his life was spent in a kind of permanent exile in the no man's land of a number of minor diplomatic posts. His early development in provincial Chile was at a physical and intellectual distance from Europe.

The literary influences like symbolism and surrealism were mediated through the work of Latin American poets so that what emerges in his early work ('Crepusculo', 1923; 'Twenty Songs of Love and One Song of Despair', 1925) is a mix of radical and traditional forms, literary and popular language.

In 1927 he somehow managed to be appointed to his first diplomatic appointment in Rangoon and spent five unhappy years of isolation, despair and near madness. In 1934 he was appointed Consul in Barcelona, and when the revolution broke out in 1936 he became an active fund-raiser for the republican government.

This period seems to have been crucial for his political formation. He collaborated with a number of Spanish and French Popular Front artists, Rafael Alberti, Miguel Hernandez, Luis Aragon, Paul Eluard and Cesar Vallejo as 'poets of the world' to 'defend the Spanish Republic.'

His clearest artistic/political expression of this period is the 'Manifesto Towards an Impure Art', published in the magazine 'Green Horse for Poetry', a confused blending of populist realism and surrealism.

The best-known poetry of the period was published in 1940, 'Spain in my Heart', on his return to Chile after a brief period as a special consul in Paris with responsibility for Spanish exiles.

Neruda was elected senator in 1945 when he officially joined the Chilean Communist Party. In another disastrous political man-

oeuvre, the Chilean Stalinists supported the nationalist Videla regime which outlawed them in 1948.

The next year or so represented the only period when Neruda had any real contact with the working class and peasantry as a political activist and poet in clandestinity.

In 1949 he went into exile, writing the 'Canto General'. Originally projected as a song for Chile, the 'Canto General' was published in Mexico in 1950.

This is his most ambitious work. It is an attempt to rescue the epic form as the most appropriate for grasping the historic experience of a continent.

The poet adopts an Orphic voice, unravelling his personal vision of history. Revealing a secret pattern of nature, fauna, geology, the story of peoples, and their oppressors the conquistadores and the dictators, terminating with an autobiography.

He brings together the diverse stylistic influences of his past in a verbal matrix of personal lyrical and political parallels. The culmination is 'The Heights of Macchu Picchu' where from the heights of the ruined Inca temple in the Andes he contemplates the destiny of his continent by 'letting the stones speak for those who built and laboured.'

This anthropomorphism, 'man speaking through nature', verges on the mystical and the poet becomes an oracle for natural and historical forces, a mediator between nature and the people.

The populist language breaks through poetic rhetoric and we see the eventual pessimism and determinism that flaws this great work when he appraises the role of the 'Juanes' or 'Johns' of South America.

*The land is called Juan  
Behind the liberators you will always  
find Juan*

*Working, fishing, and also fighting  
In his carpenter's shop, in his deep wet  
mine.*

*His hands have ploughed the soil  
They have measured every road  
His bones are buried everywhere.*

It is ironic that the man who chose to speak for a continental revolution had only a year's active contact with the Johns or Juanes he dedicated his literary life to.

And yet for him, they remain only a part of the elemental epic or tragedy, or at a political level, footsoldiers, who are, to quote, 'also fighting.'

His later poems, the 'Elemental Odes' and 'Extravagorio', are my favourites. The former celebrate everyday life and the latter are a beautiful blend of folk-lore myth, linguistic invention and savage perception.

Neruda's genius is that from the experience of a diffident, aloof and alienated life crippled by the ideology of Stalinism, he dared to penetrate the language, hopes and dreams of a turbulent continent.

It would be easy to characterise him as a flawed genius, but he too was a victim of Stalinism, embracing it officially in midlife. The contradiction between the 'ugliness' of his political career and the 'beauty' of the poetry remains. It also explains the tragic resonance of his last great farewell to living humanity:

*Go on in the dream, reaching the shore  
of the sea*

*Which has no other shore.*



# ARTISTIC THEMES AND CRITICAL VARIATIONS

**T**HE PROBLEM faced by London art critics at the Edinburgh Festival, implied Frank Dunlop, the Festival's current director at his summing up Press conference recently, is that they have difficulty seeing the thing as a whole.

Their editors dislike paying out-of-town expenses for the three full weeks over which the events stretch.

And because they tend to concentrate on the branch of the arts in which their expertise lies, they cannot follow through a theme.

This year, for example, anyone prepared to abandon exclusive devotion to the concert-hall, the theatre, or the art gallery, could have gathered a good deal of material for an analysis of at least some aspects of Japanese culture. There was the Ninagawa Theatre Company's 'The Tempest', attempting to draw out a connection between this key Shakespeare play and the way in which drama evolved historically in Japan.

There was the Matsuyama Ballet Company, demonstrating its capacity not only to learn the techniques of the West but to adapt them to Oriental traditions: their recently created 'Mandala', the story of a Buddhist artist who falls for a Christian girl, is the first ever fulllength Japanese ballet.

And within two days in the first week of this month it was possible to attend a traditional concert by the Yonin No Kai classical musicians, and a Ryudogumi rock concert - by all accounts a rather lively affair given by a three-year old group which is said to be very popular back home but which had never played in Europe before.



Yutaka Matsushige of the Ninagawa Theatre as Caliban in 'The Tempest' (photo Sean Hudson)

The critics, however (and not only the London ones), preferred to stick to their own particular last, which, after all, is what they are paid to do. The music, said the music critics, if they bothered to come at all, is not what it was in the days when the festival had a noble cousin of the Queen as director, and annual visits by Yehudi Menuhin.

Dunlop explained that musical costs have escalated proportionately even more than those of the other performing arts and pointed out that even in Lord Harewood's glorious days audiences and critics were not univally approving.

He also mounted a vigorous defence of this year's programme, which included a complete cycle of the Shostakovich string quartets played by the Shostakovich Quartet from the Soviet Union.

Of the six concerts, I heard only the last, but despite not being a music buff, I came out feeling that the agonising, elevating exquisite intimations of mortality which Andrei Shislov and his colleagues showed, virtually justified the Festival by themselves.

What has become of the really

prestigious art exhibitions, wailed the art critics? The simple answer, surely, is that capitalism has created an art market so crazy that gathering together and ensuring great 'retrospectives' of artists like Braque or Monet, such as were mounted at Festivals long gone, is almost out of the question.

For me, the two major art exhibitions which were mounted were exactly what Festival exhibitions ought to be: moving, coherent, and instructive.

The Scottish expressionist, Joan Eardley, who died tragically young a quarter of a century ago, at last received due recognition at the Talbot Rice gallery, where her portraits of Glasgow working class children and north-east Scotland seascapes were shown to be only part (though certainly a major part) of her talented output.

And if my review of 'Picabia 1879-1953' ('Workers Press' 13 August 1988) seemed to some readers 'over-the-top', as I gather it did, I do not apologise. It did not pretend to be a professional art critic's attempt to advance Picabia's claims within the canon of 'great artists.'

It sought to enthuse potential viewers of the exhibition (or more realistically potential students of

Picabia) to immerse themselves a little in pictures which - whatever ones subjective judgement of them - take one into the aesthetics of the crisis of the twentieth century: of the epoch of the break-up of capitalism and the revolutionary tasks this poses.

Only through some concern for the strivings and struggle for artistic expression which this epoch has thrown up is it possible to achieve an all-sided perspective on the goals of social revolution, an important complement to discussions on the need for it and on the political methods of achieving it.

Picabia was no revolutionary, no socialist even, but he was associated with key artistic movements such as futurism and surrealism, within which these issues were fought over.

Social revolution is not perhaps the theme likely to occur immediately to conventional critics, least of all perhaps the critics of the fine arts.

Reading newspaper reviews today however, it is sometimes difficult to detect whether they have any underlying themes at all. There is opinion aplenty, often arrogantly dismissive opinion, but what standard is being applied, what values are being argued for?

The theatre, since Dunlop took over as director five years ago, has for the first time become central to the Edinburgh Festival. It was, therefore, at Dunlop's third world theatre season, that the critics, operating with their own individual critical standards that they seldom seem to make public, aimed their sharpest shafts.

Since the first two world theatre seasons in 1968 and 1987, were a revelation, presenting a marvellous array of work from Poland, Sweden, Ireland, East and West Germany, Spain, South Africa, Japan, and - in the 70th anniversary year of the Bolshevik revolution - the Soviet Union, it was maybe inevitable that this year would be an anti-climax.

Certainly Dunlop's own effort to impose a 'theme' on this year's Festival - 'Italy, with special reference to Naples,' as the academics might put it - was at best only partially successful, as he perhaps recognised when he singled out the Japanese example.

But was there so little to be got out of what went on in Edinburgh theatres this year as devoted readers of the critics might have supposed? Is the Edinburgh Festival indeed in the terminal crisis which is annually diagnosed nowadays - and, if it is, does it matter?

Or is it criticism itself which is in the greater and more significant crisis?

Terry Brotherstone

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# THE OLYMPICS AND POLITICS

## A Proper Charlie

FOR 76-year old Sohn Kee Chung, it was a proud moment, all right.

Just over half a century ago, when the Korean won the marathon in Berlin, the band played the anthem of his country's hated Japanese imperialist overlords. It was Hitler's Olympics.

Now, bringing the Olympic torch to start the 1988 games, the still sprightly septagenarian couldn't resist giving a triumphant skip and jump as he handed it over. That's on the positive side.

The less attractive aspects of the Seoul Olympics must not be forgotten. Thousands of poor Koreans were forcibly evicted from their slum homes so as not to clutter up the Olympic city. The government, a la Marie Antoinette, then offered them seats to watch the games.

In the run-up to the Games, South Korean police were wielding not relay batons but riot batons, earning their medals battering young students who expressed their wish for the re-unification of their country.

In case we should forget what the Games are all about, International Olympics Committee lawyer Richard Pound has condemned American Express for dishing out Olympic commemoration coins and other gimmicks, when they declined to sponsor the Games.

Visa, which laid out \$15 million for advertising privileges, is fuming, but an American Express source going for gold said sportingly 'Visa should stop whining. We have just done a better job than they have.' More business rows are erupting.

### Nazi

In Britain, a catering chain that had been giving away posters of the 1936 Olympics had to withdraw them after customers' protests. But a Nazi propaganda film was shown on TV because of its alleged technical merits.

After the Second World War, the Korean people like others hoped their national independence and freedom would be won. Like others, they were betrayed, as Stalin and the western imperialists re-carved up the world. Korea was cut in two. In 1950, the struggle against the imperialist-backed right-wing Syngman Rhee dictatorship in the south became a war. Stalin, with trouble on his hands in Europe, might have welcomed the diversion.

The Soviet delegate skipped the vital UN session at which, with no restraining veto, the US got its way. Under the UN flag, assisted by loyal allies like the British Labour government, US imperialism made ruthless war in Korea, with massive bombing of civilian targets, and bestial atrocities carried out by Syngman Rhee's puppet army.

The Chinese Red Army stepped in to drive back the imperialists. Korea was a turning-point, at

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

various levels. A renegade faction from the Trotskyist movement in Britain, led by one Tony Cliff, bent to the widespread anti-communist hysteria of the time, by deciding that the cause of the war was 'Soviet imperialism'. This was the origin of what is today the 'Socialist Workers' Party'. Its leadership has remained politically bent ever since.

### Streets

Last year, after suffering military dictatorship and sweatshop conditions that made South Korea the envy of Margaret Thatcher, the workers there took to the streets, and took over shipyards and factories, in a powerful upsurge. And we may guess that next working class upsurge, while bringing Korean re-unification nearer, will also awake tremors beneath Kim Il-Sung's Stalinist bureaucracy in the North.

In a spirit of peaceful coexistence, and shared interest with the US in 'stability', the Soviet Union has ignored North Korea's pleas for joint staging of the Games, and happily sent its teams to compete

with the Americans in Seoul. It has been left to the Cubans and Ethiopians to support a boycott. Meanwhile, the East European diplomats and trade delegations are leaping such puny hurdles to sign up deals with South Korea. The US tourists are reported to be staying away in droves, having seen their government step up its garrison and send more battleships, and apparently not feeling any more secure.

We cannot begrudge Sohn Kee Chung his moment of triumph, fifty-two years after being humiliated as one of a colonial subject people, racing before the 'master race'-ists. Not only Koreans, but all who have endured national oppression, and working people everywhere, will have understood and applauded the old man's skip and jump.

But we will take it only as a small earnest of the triumph yet to come for millions of us around the world. There is no doubt that it is a joy to see human beings transcend the outer limits of physical achievement, but let them stuff their national anthems, flags and money-making media ballyhoo.

CHARLES Windsor, who occasionally yearns for the feudal absolutism of his ancestors, has shocked his normally doting subjects in the film and TV world by complaining of 'gratuitous violence' on the screen.

Not only did he neglect to point out that the inquest into the SAS slaughter of Republicans in Gibraltar is simultaneous with his platitudinous mouthings - he also clean forgot to mention that he is Colonel-in-Chief of the Parachute Regiment, whose heroic deeds include the murder of 13 unarmed demonstrators in Derry in 1972, and the massacre of scores of surrendering Argentinians at Goose Green during the Falklands war.

Perhaps one can feel some understanding of his absent-mindedness.

It is always difficult for the rest of us to recollect, looking at that face and form, and listening to his thoughts, that he is the product of centuries of painstaking breeding.

## SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY SPLIT ON POLL TAX

BY HILARY HORROCKS

**HUNDREDS of supporters in community groups fighting the poll tax lobbied the Labour special Scottish conference in Glasgow last weekend while shadow Scottish secretary Donald Dewar sneaked in by a back door, telling one lobbyist who saw him: 'These demonstrators don't impress me at all.'**

The conference decided by 512,000 votes to 225,000 to back a statement drawn up by the party's Scottish executive which states: 'Labour does not believe that a campaign of non-payment can be considered as a way to defeat the tax.'

Support for the motion came primarily from the union bloc votes - with the exception of the Transport and General Workers Union who cast 128,000 votes against.

In his speech to delegates Dewar made it clear that he had no intention of leading any campaign at all to defeat the poll tax. Having exhausted all the parliamentary possibilities, such as Tory back bench revolts and appeals to the House of Lords, he came clean with his backing for the Tories' capitalist law. 'The party which believes it will soon be in power and responsible for legislation cannot repudiate obligations under the law,' he

orated. 'You cannot argue for the rule of law when the right people are in charge and have the luxury of picking and choosing when they are not.'

But the only standing ovation of the conference went to Tom Connor speaking in favour of the T&GWU's opposition to the executive's line.

Referring to the precedent of the Tolpuddle martyrs, he said that to do nothing unconstitutional and unite behind the leadership in the next general election campaign was a 'recipe for doing nothing while the Tories systematically dismantled the entire structure of local government.' Scottish miners leader Eric Clarke also supported the transport union's stand - but without once referring to non-payment of the poll tax.

Labour party members, including a number of MPs who are pledged to the Kinnock-Dewar 'no illegality' line also organised a meeting in Govan on the eve of the conference.

A right-wing Fife MP, Dick Douglas accused Neil Kinnock of creating a precedent even in Labour party history by betraying socialist principles before he had even stepped over the threshold of 10 Downing Street.

And Bill Speirs, assistant general secretary of the Scottish

TUC and a former Scottish Labour party chair, declared that he would refuse to pay the poll tax, although he stressed he was speaking in a personal capacity.

He said that Scottish secretary Malcom Rifkind's claim that the small numbers refusing to sign the registration forms indicated support for the tax actually indicated the nature of Tory rule.

Support mobilised with threats of £200 fines showed a concept of democracy more often found in El Salvador than Edinburgh.

Meeting at Inverness, the petit-bourgeois Scottish nationalist party jumped with both feet into the gaping hole left in the leadership of the labour movement by the cowardice of Kinnock and Dewar.

It voted overwhelmingly to lead a campaign of non-payment of the tax with leader Gordon Wilson, a lawyer and former compromiser on the issue, winning wild applause for his commitment to this line.

Jim Sillars, one of the ideological leaders of the SNP, said: 'The only difference between us and the Labour party is that we have the courage of their convictions.'

In a further important development this week, Labour MPs opposing the executive's line on the poll tax announced they will be continuing their fight by organising a non-party 'Committee of a hundred' - prominent Scots who will pledge not to pay the poll tax.