

POISONED CHALICE FOR BUSH

SELDOM can an incoming President have been left such a poisoned legacy as that which awaits George Bush. For all the token support which Reagan gave in the closing stages of a long and unexciting Presidential campaign, one might think that he hated his successor.

Bush once called the Reagan policy 'voodoo economics'; now he has to grapple with the consequences of those policies over the past eight years.

During the campaign both major candidates carefully skirted around the main problems facing the American people. Beating the drum of patriotism and indulging in mutual abuse helped to turn many people off politics American-style altogether.

The voters who don't bother to cast their vote have long been the largest 'party' in Presidential elections.

It is widely recognised that US capitalism faces an historic crisis. During the next presidency fundamental choices will have to be made over which electors will have no control.

As always the decisions will be made behind the scenes by those who hold the reins of power from Wall Street banks and the giant corporations which dominate the economy.

These were the people who put up the huge sums of money required to pay for the campaigns of Democrats as well as Republicans to give the illusion that people had a choice, that 'democracy' was being upheld.

It was obvious to anyone that as far as programme was concerned the candidates were not anxious to manifest their differences because, basically, they were of small importance.

The only choice the electors had was who was to misrepresent them in the White House for the next four years.

While the mass of working people struggled with everyday problems of finding or keeping a job, of meeting the mortgage and instalment payment and paying for essentials at the supermarket check-out, the rich have been happily digesting the gains of the Reagan years.

They are looking to the next president to continue the good work, reducing real wages, slashing social benefits and making the

BY TOM KEMP

world safe for them to invest in.

As it wouldn't do to have an economic crisis in the run-up to a presidential election the last few months has seen an entirely artificial situation.

Foreign central banks have been holding up the dollar, at great expense, while the Federal Reserve Board has kept the supply of money and credit rolling to avert a recession which many authorities believe is around the corner.

The spectre of last year's stock exchange crash is still haunting bankers and businessmen. If the crash did not have the effect which many rushed to assume, namely a slump of 1930's proportions, the antidotes applied by the Fed - as representative of the great financial interest and with the backing of the Reagan team - may only have postponed the evil day for a year or so.

The economy has been kept going by an enormous expansion of credit in every form. Reagan took office promising to end budget deficits and balance the budget.

He leaves the White House with a monster national debt, imposing an enormous interest burden to be met by taxpayers in the future.

One promise of his 1980 campaign he rapidly fulfilled: taxes were cut, to the advantage of both the rich and the very rich. Instead of using their increased income for productive investment, they upped their expenditure on high-priced luxury items, speculated in real estate or on the stock market.

This huge 'Monopoly' game forced up share prices in the years 1984-1987 until the crash of October, 1987. While the vultures moved in to make a killing, big corporations were forced to buy their own shares to prevent a total collapse.

Insider-traders, using privileged information (not all of whom have been found out), made fortunes overnight. All this at the expense of the smaller shareholders who



Central Hall Westminster was not big enough to hold the thousands who marched in support of sacked trades unionists at GCHQ. See page 3 for story.

bore the brunt of the fall in share values.

The other electoral promise which Reagan kept was to increase military expenditure to meet the challenge from the 'evil empire', as he called the Soviet Union. It has almost doubled since 1980 and the increase by itself accounts for almost all of the budget deficit.

Federal spending targeted at the poor and near-poor has fallen from 5.7 per cent of GNP in 1981 to 3.7 per cent in 1988.

While some important Federal agencies such as Commerce, Energy, Labour and Environmental Protection have seen their budgets reduced in real terms there has been a 5 per cent increase in the civilian staff of the military agencies.

Arms spending means vital and lucrative contracts for the giant corporations supplying the Pentagon and US allies overseas (often financed by the US).

High tech firms look to the Strategic Defence Initiative ('Star Wars'), dear to Reagan, while foreign competitors beat them in the civilian market at home and abroad.

There is no sign that Bush, or any other President, will reduce the enormous military establishment which ensures the world power of the US whatever concessions the Soviet bureaucracy under Gorbachev may be prepared to make.

Over half a million servicemen and women continue to be stationed in bases scattered throughout the world.

Over two million people are kept off the labour market because they are in uniform. Over a million civilians are employed by the military. Many millions of US workers depend directly or indirectly upon military contracts for their jobs.

The adverse effects of the huge military budget are many. It contributes considerably to the budget deficit.

Because of the high level of spending overseas it undermines the dollar and adds to the budget deficit.

It drains away scientific research, skilled labour and resources from the civilian sector and thus hastens the decline of the industries upon which US competitiveness depends in the long run. While other agencies are starved of funds the Pentagon readily gets what it wants.

There is an intimate association between the big corporations and the service chiefs, giving rise to the famous 'military-industrial complex' which has more power than any elected body in the United States.

Whatever other economies may have to be made by the next occupant of the White House,

Thatcher and reformism

AS PLANS are revealed for old-age pensions to be means-tested, Thatcher's demolition of the Welfare State takes another crunch forward. Elderly people who have saved up some money, or who are covered by other pensions schemes, will lose their right to a pension, along with free medical attention and other benefits.

This news comes as the government tussles with the feeble resistance of some of its own wetter MPs over the abolition of free eye tests and dental check-ups.

Many old people have already been hard-hit by the recent savage cuts in Housing Benefit. These attacks on the elderly are matched by blows struck at the last remnants of the state education system and the phasing-out of Child Benefit. Independent local government has all but vanished.

The latest moves go beyond the destruction of the measures introduced under the 1945 Labour government, reaching back to the actions of Lloyd-George's Liberal Government of 1906.

Of course, the Labour leaders will bleat the usual protests at this latest attack, as will some of the wetter Tories, while those sheep in wolves clothing on the 'left' will make louder noises. This performance is by now the expected accompaniment to Tory brutality.

Indeed, without such ritualised opposition, Thatcher would hardly be able to do her work. Soon, Kinnock will once again call upon Thatcher to relent and to see the error of her ways.

But the error is his, not hers. Thatcher's savagery is an accurate reflection of capitalism in its latest phase of decay. The 'mistake' here is that of reformism of all varieties.

The argument between the reformists and the revolutionaries was over whether life under the old order could, step by step, be made more comfortable for workers and their families. The reformists told us that a series of Labour governments, introducing a welfare scheme here and a spot of nationalisation there, would do the trick.

No need for troublesome revolution, no need for all that theorising to prepare for it. Just vote for us, they declared, and we will see you alright. Equal opportunities and an assured minimum living standard would be guaranteed for all, for ever.

They lied.

Now, as Thatcher day by day brings misery to millions, the reformists cower in terror. Staunch devotees of Parliament, they are utterly incapable of providing even a credible parliamentary opposition. As for stopping her onward march, they decided long ago that that is unthinkable.

So as the Thatcher tank crushed one prize reformist plant after another, they retreated in disorder, closely followed by their 'left' critics, all loudly bemoaning workers' refusal to resist.

This last is the biggest lie of all. As the miners' strike and other class actions revealed, behind the screen provided by reformism, a massive anger and hatred for Thatcherism builds up. The problem is not the ability of the working class to fight back, but the absence of a leadership prepared to break through this screen. What is needed is not just a defence of what remains of the old set-up - although that may well be the form the movement takes at first - but the mobilisation of the class to finish for good with Thatcher and the social order she so well exemplifies.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £574.62

This month we must raise £2,000 for the Fighting Fund.

It is urgent that we put plans into operation for improvement in the production of Workers Press. However we are also in great danger of closing the paper down again if we do not raise the £2,000 needed every month.

Workers Press is receiving a big response from our overseas readers. Comrades in Japan have now sent in a total of £1,000, and in a letter received last week they express the hope that the paper will continue. There is a great deal of interest amongst Trotskyists in Austria, and oppositionists in Hungary.

A growing number of people want Workers Press because it does not merely record the news, but gives Marxist analyses of events, takes up a consistent fight against Stalinism, includes columns by Peter Fryer and Tom Owen, and publishes serious reviews of the arts, theatre and film.

This does not necessarily make it an easy paper to sell casually. But the contents of Workers Press are a reflection of the major advances we have been able to make since 1985, when we expelled the philistine Healy and his clique.

Workers Press is now becoming an organiser to rebuild the Fourth International, gathering around it those who are dedicated to the fight against Stalinism and Stalinist influence in the Fourth International. We are specially pleased to welcome back to its columns comrades who were violently pushed out of the movement under Healy.

It is in the light of these experiences that we ask our readers to ensure that our Fighting Fund is successful and that we lay the basis for a development of Workers Press in the near future.

Dot Gibson

Send donations to:
Workers Press Fighting Fund, PO Box 735,
London, SW9 7QS

INTERNATIONAL FUND

In last week's Workers Press we told readers there would be a report of the International Fund. However, this will be published next week following a meeting of the Preparatory Committee. In the meantime we have £800 per month in Bankers' Orders. Let's try to make this up to £1,000.

LONDON DISTRICT OF THE WORKERS
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
IMPERIALISM, NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM
IN IRELAND: A series of three lectures by SIMON PIRANI
THURSDAYS AT 7.30pm

at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

1. BRITISH COLONISATION, IRISH REBELLION AND KARL MARX - Thursday 10 November
2. JAMES CONNOLLY: SOCIALIST AND INTERNATIONALIST - Thursday 17 November
3. FROM IMPERIALIST PARTITION TO SOCIALIST REVOLUTION - Thursday 24 November

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
SOUTH EAST LONDON BRANCH

Tuesday 6 December • 7.30 p.m.

Charlton House (Wilson Room) • Charlton Village, London SE7
*'Beginnings of the political revolution': a report by Peter Fryer
on his recent visit to the Soviet Union*

CITY OF LONDON ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP
Freedom for Moses Mayekiso! • Release the Alexandra Five!
Rallies on the non-stop picket outside the South African Embassy in
Trafalgar Square, London
Saturday 19 November, 3 p.m. - 6 p.m.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the
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Name.....date.....

Address.....

Trade union.....Age (if under 21).....

Send to:
Secretary to the Central Committee, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

NATIONAL WRATH OVER GCHQ

Scotland

BY HILARY HORROCKS

THOUSANDS of Scottish civil servants and other trade unionists took part in demonstrations in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness.

Staff at job centres, DSS offices, airport customs, and immigration and the Scottish Office were among those who walked out to join the national protest.

All the main union banners were present on the 5,000-strong march through Glasgow, which ended with speakers shuttling between three different cinemas to address the unexpectedly large audience.

Hundreds of IRSS members also participated in the day of action despite a narrow defeat in a ballot for support.

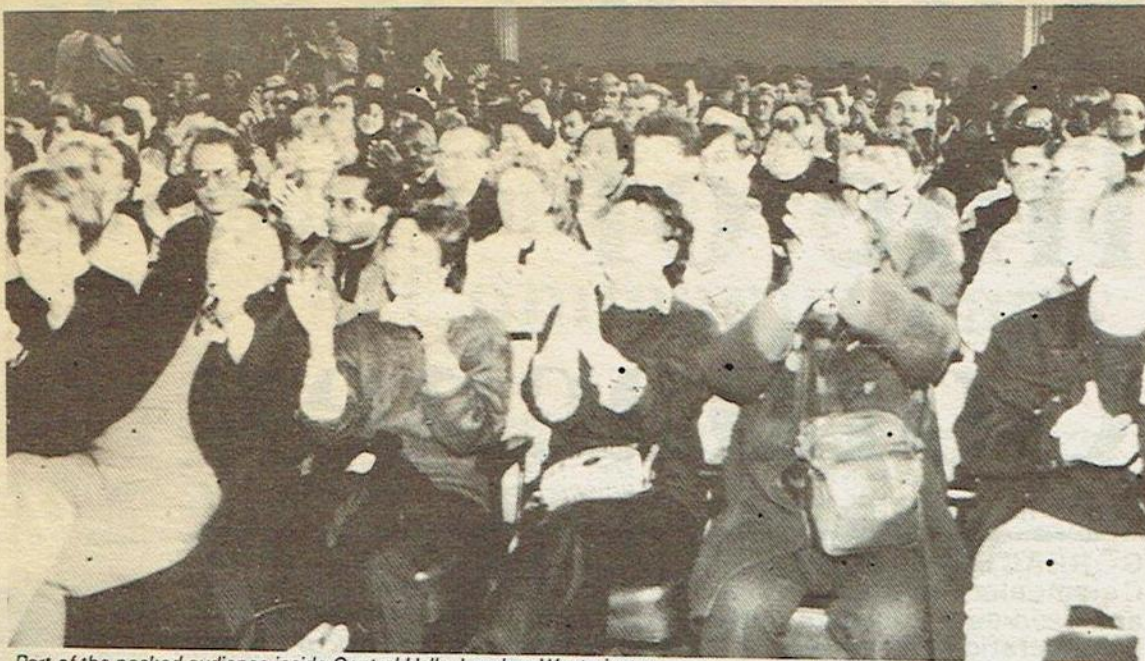
John Sheldon, deputy general secretary of the National Union of Public and Civil Servants, warned that trade unionists must never let the issue of GCHQ die.

All the speakers, who also included MEP Janey Buchan, Scottish shadow secretary Donald Dewar, and STUC general secretary Campbell Christie, expressed the craven nature of the British trade union leadership as they protested at length that they were just as patriotic as the Tories, and that the banning of unions at GCHQ was a slur on the 'loyalty' of their members.

But Clive Lloyd, one of the victimised staff at GCHQ, won a standing ovation when he said: 'I will be loyal to the government but it must not dictate to me.'

Lloyd drew attention to the film, 'Cry Freedom', which is showing at the cinema where he was speaking. The attacks on freedom in Britain, he said, were now approaching those in South Africa, Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia.

'Thatcher laid a wreath to dead



Part of the packed audience inside Central Halls, London, Westminster

trade unionists in Poland, but not to the Tolpuddle martyrs,' he said. 'I'm a free individual. Too many have died for my right to be a trade unionist for me to give up this struggle now.'

Sheffield

BY TOM OWEN

IN SHEFFIELD a mass rally of 3,000 was addressed by Peter Heathcliff, secretary of the NUM. The organisers had booked a hall which held only 900. In Sheffield and its surrounding area 5,000 took strike action.

Miners, engineers, teachers, hospital workers, and sacked miners defence-group banners were among those seen on the march. Some of the teachers who struck have already been threatened with victimisation. Unexpectedly large marches took place also in Hull and Bradford.

London

BY ALAN CLARK

MIKE GRINDLEY, the sacked GCHQ worker was greeted with a standing ovation when he stood on the platform of Westminster Central Halls. He told the meeting 'NO government has the right to tell its employees that your democratic rights have been removed. NO government has the right to pick and choose who shall or shall not retain the right to join an independent trade union and NO government should ride roughshod over ordinary people in this disgraceful fashion.' Kinnock and Willis complained when they spoke of the reforms being swept away by Thatcher under the direction of the world crisis, but put forward no defence of democratic rights except through the election of a Labour government.

SCOTTISH TEACHERS REVOLT

BY JOE EYRE

TEN THOUSAND teachers marched through Edinburgh on 1 November in protest at the Tory attacks on education.

The demonstration was the highlight of the day of action involving well over 20,000 Scottish teachers following a 66 per cent majority for strike action in a national ballot.

The strike and demonstrations are seen as the opening shots in a campaign against Tory education policies - a campaign that has the full support of the Scottish TUC.

At a rally after the march, the union's new general secretary Jim Martin, attacked Tory policies.

The most controversial aspect of the union's campaign is their claim that Scottish education is being 'anglicised'. This has been called into question by the union's left-wing, the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers.

In a leaflet distributed along the route of the march, the Federation pointed out that national testing, opting out and school boards are not part of the English system.

They are Tory policies being forced upon the system against the wishes of the teachers' unions.

The leaflet also called for 'stronger action such as an immediate work to contract and a boycott of national testing.'

It demanded the rejection of the government's vocational training scheme, TVEI, and 'enterprise education', improvements to the comprehensive system and a democratic system for education.

There are clear signs that a full-blown revolt is emerging against Tory attacks on Scottish education.

Brent's chickens come home to roost

BY ED HALL

UNDER threat of surcharge (heavy personal fines) for overspending from the government, Brent Labour councillors changed the rules for deciding whether a family had made itself intentionally homeless. The changes mean that where formerly three families a week were listed as making themselves 'intentionally homeless' the figure has now soared to 17. The council has no legal obligation to rehouse them, and thus saves money.

The anger of homeless people in Brent has been vented on workers in the Housing Unit as they have been asked to explain the 'moved goalposts' on behalf of the bankrupt Council.

When councillors refused to install protective screens in the Housing Needs Unit, after four attacks from the public, workers went on strike and have been out for six weeks. - The borough is

in such chaos that it had to borrow money from Ealing last month in order to pay council workers' salaries.

The dispute escalated after the Council conscripted scab labour at the local Job Centre.

At the beginning of the action strike pay was refused by the national executive of the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) because there was an occupation. When workers were forced to lift the occupation the council brought in the scab workforce.

The dispute shows how ready Brent Councillors are to hide behind the staff they employ. They are creating an explosive situation - at the next Council meeting there will be a strong police presence.

Legal officers have told the council to make £17 million cuts to 'balance the books' before Christmas. Where all other Labour councils began making cuts last year, Brent neither cut its

budget nor produced a plan to fight. The ruling group on the council (12 councillors have voted against the cuts) has now accepted total capitulation which means industrial chaos, rent strikes and dangerous conditions for workers..

The greatest danger is to the most vulnerable. Two years ago the Jasmine Beckford report advocated far more than the 220 social workers employed at that time by Brent.

Today there are 109 social workers in post. Part of this reduction was made in severance schemes operated by the Council. 233 teaching jobs have been lost this year; schools have been closed and some specialist services have been completely destroyed. Primary and nursery schools are likely to be the next for attack by the Council.

Demonstrations, strikes and meetings are taking place in Brent on a daily basis, while the council plans another 96 redundancies before Christmas.

The political line of Gorbachev

PART III continued from Workers Press 29 October 1988

GORBACHEV'S report to the Special Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union should not of course be analysed as a contribution to Marxism, to be debated with. The bureaucratic caste which Gorbachev leads uses 'Marxist' phrases and references to Lenin only as an ideological device to cover its tracks.

But even these obligatory gestures to Marxism involve big problems and contradictions. The historical origins of the Stalinist bureaucracy's victory over Bolshevism and the working class lie back in the 1920s and 1930s, when it really was a question, for Stalin's faction, to systematically corrupt and revise Marxism on the road to building up the terror machine which was to liquidate all opposition.

Like it or not, today's Soviet bureaucracy rests on this counter-revolutionary struggle to destroy Marxism, Bolshevism, and not only on its physical control of the state apparatus and, through that, the economy.

Gorbachev's references to the heritage of Marxism are the crudest distortions, and their crudity indicates the depth of the degeneration of the bureaucracy as well as the depth of its crisis. Take this example:

'From the standpoint of our day - with its mounting nuclear menace, heightening of other global problems, and progressing internationalisation of all the processes in the world, ever more integral and interdependent for all its contradictions - we have sought a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between working-class interests and those of humanity as a whole, an idea built into Marxism from the outset.

Let us pause for a moment. Marxism discovered at its 'outset' that the future of humanity as a whole depended on the working class making a revolution in its own interests against the interests of the ruling class.

There is no 'interrelationship between working-class interests and those of humanity as a whole' except this contradictory one: that the proletarian revolution and socialism are historically necessary.

Gorbachev, however, interprets this 'interrelationship' in exactly the opposite sense. Thus: This led us to the conclusion that common human values have a priority in our age, this being the core of the new(!) political thinking.

'The new political thinking has enabled us to appreciate more fully how vitally important to contemporary international relations are the moral values that have over the centuries been evolved by nations, and generalised and spelled out by humanity's great minds.'

Not content with completely distorting the meaning of Marxism on the question of the necessity of socialist revolution, Gorbachev here tries to take advantage of the universal revulsion against the crimes of Stalinism by channelling it into some 'moral' crusade led by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

What moral values were 'evolved by nations' he is wise enough not to try and tell us.

He has dropped even the message of the opening passage of the Communist Manifesto, that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles, and that the ruling ideas of any 'nation', including its 'moral values', are the ideas of its ruling class.

Let us pause for a moment. Marxism discovered at its 'outset' that the future of humanity as a whole depended on the working class making a revolution in its own interests against the interests of the ruling class. There is no 'interrelationship between working-class interests and those of humanity as a whole' except this contradictory one: that the proletarian revolution and socialism are historically necessary.

(The new book by Cyril Smith, 'Communist Society and Marxist Theory', published by Index Books, price £4.95, should be carefully studied for an understanding of the foundations of Marxism so grossly distorted by Gorbachev. On the question of 'moral values' and their relation to the class struggle and revolution, Trotsky's 'Their Morals and Ours' is indispensable.)



Gorbachev

Actually Gorbachev leaves us in no doubt about the meaning, for the international class struggle, of his 'new political thinking'.

As we have already noted, Gorbachev's whole line is determined by the dead end reached by the bureaucracy's theory and practice of 'socialism in a single country', demanding a new phase in this bureaucracy's accommodation to imperialism.

In ideological terms, we thus find Gorbachev no longer feeling it necessary to justify the bureaucracy's line in 'Marxist-Leninist' words, but instead spouting about freedom and democracy.

Thus: 'A big role (in the 'new political thinking') by our establishment of broad contacts with representatives of other countries - from heads of state and government to ordinary citizens, with universally recognised authorities in the scientific and cultural world, outstanding writers, leaders and delegations of political parties, civic organisations and movements, with trade union, social democratic and religious leaders, and members of parliament.

'Such intensive direct contacts have made possible a 'rediscovery', as it were, of the Soviet Union by the outer world, while we, for our part, have got the chance to obtain a better picture and understanding of the world around us, to take part in discussing its problems and in searching for ways of solving them, of extracting whatever is useful from ideas originating in other

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

cultures and spiritual traditions, as was reflected, for example, in the 1986 Delhi Declaration.

'With the help of such feedback it has also become easier to reach mutual understanding on the significance of such values as freedom and democracy.'

(It is interesting to compare Gorbachev's explanation of the 'new political thinking' with a report made 32 years ago, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, by Mikoyan. Peaceful coexistence and peaceful, parliamentary roads to socialism were the political line then too, but Mikoyan still found it necessary to pay lip-service to the overthrow of capitalism.)

Thus: 'We believe that if anyone attempts to use H-bombs or A-bombs, the best people of the world will not allow civilisation to perish, they will immediately unite, put the aggressors in strait-jackets and end all wars, and, with them, capitalism.'

By now, Gorbachev's report is getting down to cases with a vengeance: 'mutual understanding on the significance of freedom and democracy', indeed! With imperialism!

For a moment Gorbachev seeks to reassure the doubters: Are there any illusions here? Have the imperialist sources of aggression and war vanished? No.

'We do not forget about the threat to peace issuing from imperialist militarism and consider that there are no guarantees as yet (as yet?) that the positive processes that have begun are irreversible.'

'The new political thinking, in fact, enables us to find new opportunities for opposing policies of strength on a broader political basis than in the past...'

The reference to Leninist 'orthodoxy' about imperialist war has nothing to do with Marxism. It is strictly for the purpose of deflecting criticism by the so-called 'hard-liners'. And all that Gorbachev offers them is the cynically pragmatist proposition that the 'new political thinking' can be justified by its efficacy in winning allies.

Gorbachev's real position is that of doing everything to get a comprehensive deal with imperialism for regulating world politics. That means the bureaucracy using its influence and resources to sell the revolution in South Africa and every other country. Such betrayal serves not only the imperialists, from whom Gorbachev expects some economic quid pro quo, but it also serves directly the bureaucracy itself, because the working class in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China would be immeasurably strengthened in its political revolution by new revolutionary victories in the capitalist world.

Gorbachev dresses up this strategy with the 'new political thinking'. The 'mutual understanding' on 'freedom and democracy' takes shape: ...the recall of forces from foreign territories and dismantling of bases

there, confidence-building measures, international economic security (in a capitalist world?), and the idea of directly projecting the authority of science into world political affairs (??).

And now he waxes lyrical: 'We have begun to base our contacts in relations between states on dialogue; in the sphere of disarmament, on a readiness to accept far-reaching reciprocal verification. This has made it possible to broaden the scope of trust far beyond the limits of the habitual philosophical spectrum (?).

'We thereby discovered a considerable potential of mutual understanding and of an acceptance of coexistence and cooperation even in influential quarters far removed from us ideologically.'

Stalinism was always, essentially, the force which acted to destroy Bolshevism, destroy the continuity of revolutionary Marxist theory and practice, the only instrument with which the working class can make the socialist revolution. Bolshevism could develop into the leadership, under Lenin and Trotsky, of the October Revolution, and go on to found the world communist movement of the twentieth century, only through a decisive break with social democracy, the Second International.

With all this mutual understanding and common acceptance of moral values between the imperialists and the 'socialist world', as the bureaucracy calls the degenerated and deformed workers' states, what is to remain of the communist movement, in Gorbachev's 'new political thinking'?

We have seen the importance Gorbachev attaches to contacts with other political and 'spiritual' traditions, including social democracy. He expands on this: 'The Communist Party of the Soviet Union regards itself as an inalienable part of the world communist movement, which is at present conducting a difficult quest of the way forward to a new stage in its historical development (what this means is left in total obscurity, CS).

'And we will - on the basis of absolutely equal rights and respect - take an active

part in this quest. There is a growing international potential (he means, there is more political mileage, for the bureaucracy) in our new relations with numerous civic forces representing world science and culture, with political parties of a different ideological orientation, above all with Socialists, Social Democrats, Labour Party members, and other circles and movements of what is known as the Left. Our solidarity with the working people of the whole world, with the fighters against colonialism, racism and reaction is unflinching.' (my emphasis, CS)

These references to reformist parties clearly have nothing to do with the communist tactic of united front, which has the purpose of organising a united struggle of the working class under conditions where the class learns in experience the treacherous role of the reformist leaders. On the contrary, it is here a question of the bureaucracy aligning itself with the reformists and strengthening their credibility with the working class, facilitating their treachery. We can expect moves, in the Stalinist parties which follow Gorbachev, in the direction of unity with the reformist parties.

Stalinism was always, essentially, the force which acted to destroy Bolshevism, destroy the continuity of revolutionary Marxist theory and practice, the only instrument with which the working class can make the socialist revolution. Bolshevism could develop into the leadership, under Lenin and Trotsky, of the October Revolution, and go on to found the world communist movement of the twentieth century, only through a decisive break with social democracy, the Second International.

This was because the socialist parties, by supporting their 'own' capitalist ruling classes in the imperialist war of 1914, revealed that they had gone over to the side of capitalism.

Without the decisive break to set course for a new, communist international, the continuity of Marxism could not be retained, revolutionary leadership could not be built, and there would be no communist movement.

The Stalinised 'Communist parties' long ago ceased to be communist. But the working class must be warned, urgently, of the preparation by Gorbachev, in this report, to erase even the formal recognition of this essential historical discontinuity, the split with the labour traitors.

In its own way, it signals very surely the conscious line of the bureaucracy to persist in its new phase of 'peaceful coexistence', collaboration with imperialism against the proletarian revolution in the capitalist countries, and against the political revolution in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Personal Column

Peter Fryer

No wreath for Clinton McCurbin

LAST week Margaret Thatcher laid a wreath on the grave of Polish workers murdered by police.

And last week a coroner's jury, after a grossly biased summing up by the coroner and a discussion lasting three and a half hours, brought in a verdict of death by misadventure on a young black man publicly strangled by Thatcher's police in Wolverhampton last year.

For Clinton McCurbin, as for all the other British black citizens murdered by British police in the past four years - Stephen Boyle, Nenneh Jalloh, Cynthia Jarrett, Ahmed Katongole, Anthony Lemard, Anozie Osita, Ahmar Qureshi, and Eusif Ryan - there is of course no wreath from the prime minister, nor one single word of pity, or sorrow, or concern, or of sympathy for the grieving relatives.

Clinton McCurbin was only 24. He was arrested at a clothes shop on 20 February 1987 for allegedly using a stolen Barclaycard to buy a jacket worth £45.

Whether McCurbin was guilty of this offence is far from certain. What is certain is that his short life ended a few seconds after PC Michael Hobday laid violent hands on him.

Witnesses told how Hobday held his arm round McCurbin's neck and pulled his head back. Another police officer lay across McCurbin's back, and a meddlesome customer held his legs.

When a passer-by protested, Hobday retorted: 'Hold his neck? I will break his bloody neck.'

McCurbin was struggling desperately for air. But, in his mother's words, 'the arm around his neck was simply not released until he stopped breathing and died'. Her son, she said, 'did not have to die in the way that he did'.

Medical evidence showed that McCurbin died because of compression on his neck. PC Hobday, on the other hand, claimed it was McCurbin's chin he had held his arm around; he denied applying a neck lock.

The coroner told the jury: 'You will probably feel that if PC Hobday had had any intention of breaking anyone's neck he would not have made a public announcement to that effect.'

'You may feel that the remark was the reaction of PC Hobday to an unhelpful criticism of his struggle with McCurbin.'

'In my view it would be unsafe and wrong even to find the arresting officers misconducted themselves in a difficult situation in any sense whatsoever.'

This is the view also of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Complaints Authority, both of whom have decided to take no action against the officers concerned.

And the reaction of the West Midlands chief constable, Mr Geoffrey Dear?

He told the press last week: 'I cannot and will not give a categorical assurance that this will not happen again.'

This unprecedented and astonishing guarantee that policemen can murder their prisoners with impunity could not possibly have been given without Mrs Thatcher's backing.

The voice is the voice of Dear, but the sentiments, and the naked threat, are those of our selectively wreath-laying prime minister.

And yet, if I were a police officer in Wolverhampton, I should be going about my business these days with a certain degree of circumspection.

The working people of Britain have a long and honourable tradition of not taking police brutality lying down. And the murder of Clinton McCurbin, it is safe to say, will not go unavenged, any more than the murder of Cynthia Jarrett went unavenged.

Sooner or later the ground-swell of protest against the senseless snuffing out of young lives by police terror will once more boil up into a hurricane, and the police will once more experience the full fury of popular resentment.

When that day comes the police will reap only that which they have sown. They will have no one to blame but themselves.

But hurricanes, for all their devastating power, are blind and brainless and spasmodic. They destroy. They do not build.

Thoughtful and far-sighted young people seek far more than the transient satisfaction of revenge for the atrocity committed by the Wolverhampton police on 20 February 1987.

Young people who think with their heads, not with their hearts, will look a great deal further than this short-term goal.

They will look towards the overthrow of the system which makes such an atrocity possible, allows it to be described as a 'misadventure', and permits coroner, chief constable, and prime minister alike to give it the blessing of their callous indifference.

They will look towards the building of a revolutionary movement dedicated to the overthrow of this brutal and corrupt system. That will be their ultimate revenge.

AS I SEE IT

BY TOM OWEN

A season for treason

THE BEGINNING of November sees two popular festivals, Halloween and Guy Fawkes night. The former seems to have become more popular recently, and is interesting because it is one of the few remaining 'anti-feasts' or caricatures of religious festivals, in this case the feast of All Saints.

The revival of Halloween has alarmed both fundamentalist and mainstream Christians alike. The bible pushers see it as a return to devil worship and 'natural religion' whilst the sophisticates see it as a revival of popular superstitions undermining a 'real' religious outlook.

Last year the Religious Studies Advisors to the Sheffield local education authority sent a cautionary note to all schools warning of the dangers of such occult practices as putting candles in turnips, or decorating school classrooms with cats, cauldrons, books, bells, candles and sexist images of witches on broomsticks.

'Bonfire night' is the oldest protestant sectarian festival of

mainland Britain. Its meanings have changed over the centuries but remnants of its origin still remain in its macabre celebration of the burning of a heretic as well as in the names of the traditional fireworks, 'Catherine wheel', 'Roman candle', 'little demons' etc.

The attitude of the authorities to such popular events has always been ambiguous. Apart from the very real anxieties of the caring professions about the safety of children at such events, the prospect of the population of Britain having enough combustible and explosive material on the same night to blow up the present Houses of Parliament or a number of police stations must cause a frisson to run through the Home Office.

The 'sensible' labourites of course are for municipal bonfires. In recent years we have seen Labour councillors use the fires to denounce Thatcher's cuts which threaten such events before Guy Fawkes, whose mask looks suspiciously like you know who, goes up in flames. However at the moment, the lady is not for turning or burning and it is the labourites and their municipal soup kitchen politics that have gone up in flames.

The anarchist jokes about Parliament and honest intentions are the result of a deep suspicion of the politics of capitalist democracy and are in many senses inappropriate mo-

dern anachronisms. The durability of the custom is not explained by dubious theories of a political counter-culture. Neither is it by the folklorist mystique of pagan fire cults at the onset of winter and night.

Part of the explanation for the impact of the gunpowder plot was the long term implication for the social order of regicide. But the dramatic impact of the event at the time must have been greatly magnified by the new destructive technology used. Such quantities of explosives displayed in an age when musketry was in its infancy and the halbard cross-bow and longbow were still used, must have appeared as overwhelming as some advanced weaponry are to us.

James I, one of the intended victims writes, 'And so the earth as it were opened - should have sent forth of the bottom of the Stygian lake such sulphured smoke, furious flames, and fearful thunder, as should have by their diabolical Doomsday destroyed and defaced, in the twinkling of an eye, not only our present living princes and people, but even our insensible monuments'.

Jacobean and Elizabethan England was a 'small world' and the shock waves of another spectacular plot following the 'Bye Plot' and the doomed Essex uprising, not to mention sporadic famines and bread riots in the provinces, must have rea-

ched deep into popular consciousness.

The playwright, Ben Jonson, had dined with two of the conspirators a few days before the event and Shakespeare most probably knew Catesby and Grant from childhood. The plotters were desperate men converted to Catholicism who were frustrated by the failure of the Stuarts to alleviate their position and considered themselves betrayed by the Spanish peace settlement in 1604.

But despite their religious ideology, they too were 'new men' of the times. They were political animals who had rationalised their practice by the concept of 'equivocation' or political realism expounded by theorists like Machiavelli. For them lying, intrigue, violence were justifiable in a just cause, theirs being Catholicism. 'Equivocation' was seen to be the moral disease of the early 16th century.

Shakespeare explores this theme under the impact of the events of 1605 in Macbeth, that powerful portrayal of absolutist ambitions, to please his new patron James I who maintained conveniently that in all circumstances 'that rebellion be ever unlawful'. His cherished 'Divine Right of Kings' was soon to be challenged by a different form of 'Equivocation' especially that which the more plebeian elements like the Ranters took to mean 'deny all' to temporal powers.

POISONED CHALICE FOR BUSH

continued from page 1

military expenditure will not be cut. There is no prospect of serious disarmament.

Arms

The present level of economic activity could not be sustained without the massive arms budget. While Reagan promised to cut government expenditure it has actually risen to almost a trillion dollars.

The underpinning of the much-vaunted 70 month expansion depends upon 'military-Keynesianism', and a continuous expansion of public and private debt. Someday soon the bills will have to be paid and the cheques covered. To bring to a halt the constant rise in the national debt requires stiff decisions.

It is plain enough that if only to restore foreign confidence either Federal spending will have to be cut or taxes will have to be raised. But that has not been presented at the polls as a clear-cut choice.

Even more important for the long-term health of US capitalism is the balance of payments deficit arising from the fact that Americans buy or borrow from abroad more than they sell or lend.

The US has moved quickly from being a creditor to a debtor on balance.

The peculiar role of the dollar in international finance gives the US a privileged position compared with its foreign rivals however 'strong' their own currencies may be. The Federal Reserve Board can simply issue more money as required and raise the rate of interest to the level necessary to attract foreign funds.

Opposition

Increasingly, especially in France and West Germany, voices are being raised in opposition to the dollar's special position which is nowhere laid down by international agreement or based upon any theory.

US finance-capitalists are able to continue to throw their weight around internationally because of the sheer size of the US economy.

The US market is absolutely vital for export-oriented countries, such as Taiwan and Korea, but also including Japan (two-fifths of whose exports are sold in the US) and West Germany.

What is happening as far as these countries are concerned is that they must sell their exports in the United States in order to realise the value, and surplus value, embodied in them.

Without these sales they will be rapidly confronted with an over-production crisis. They have to accept dollars, but as they have more dollars than they need for their own purchases the excess seeks an outlet in the US.

Thus an increasing proportion of the Federal debt is held by foreigners.

The Japanese are the most visible of those foreigners who are establishing their branch plants in the US, as well as banks and finance houses, and investing in

real estate.

Foreign lending to the US now amounts to over 3.5 per cent of the national income. In other words, that proportion of US spending is financed by borrowing from foreigners. The US, in short, is living beyond its means, living on borrowed time.

It is obvious enough that this is storing up problems for the not too distant future which will fall straight into the lap of the new presidential incumbent.

As a result of this process the US has become the largest international borrower. An increasing interest bill to foreigners has to be met.

So far foreigners have shown considerable confidence in the US, but this really expresses the fact that they have nowhere else to put their money.

If they do decide to pull it out, if confidence in the dollar evaporates, the panic could bring the whole financial system tumbling down which would make 19 October 1987 seem like a minor 'correction'.

High interest rates in New York and the confidence which for the time being foreigners still retain in the dollar has attracted vast sums

into the US financial markets.

This means that needy countries find it difficult if not impossible to obtain commercial loans on reasonable terms. It also glosses over some deep-seated problems in the US banking system, especially those arising from the reckless loans to Latin American and African countries made in the early 1980s.

Loans

Many of these loans (classed as 'non-performing') form part of the assets of the banks. It is therefore extremely necessary for these banks to continue to attract foreign capital if they are to remain solvent.

Indeed, deposits made by the corrupt rulers of US satellites form a significant part of this capital.

Meanwhile the International Monetary Fund demands that these countries should give free play to market forces, reduce taxation on the wealthy and cut living standards so that they can meet debt repayments to US and other foreign banks.

In this period of the death agony of capitalism, the greatest capitalist country inescapably

draws into itself all the problems of the world economy. These problems are on a scale and of a complexity exceeding anything which has gone before.

Their immensity and historical importance dwarf the pygmies who have been fighting it out for the right to occupy the White House for the next four years.

Problems

Do they even recognise the nature and scale of the problems which Reagan simply pushed into the future so that he could go on making his cheerful assertions that everything was just fine?

Decisions can no longer be postponed. The US working class and minority people must be prepared for an attack on their wages, rights and living standards far exceeding that under the previous administration once Bush is installed in the White House.

The suffering masses in the former colonial and semi-colonial countries can expect only more oppression and exploitation as the financial barons seek to get repayment of the loans with which their corrupt governments have saddled them.

Camden Councillors Deaf to Bullets Campaign

BY SARAH HANNIGAN

CAMDEN councillors last week endorsed the Thatcher government's censorship of Irish opposition to British policy in the six counties - by boycotting speakers from the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets.

Only seven Labour councillors, from a total of 31, were prepared to listen to speakers from the Belfast-based campaign's demand that the use of plastic bullets be banned. All Tory, Liberal-SDP and the majority of Labour councillors stayed away from the council meeting.

Jim McCabe, whose wife Nora was murdered by a plastic bullet in 1981 told the meeting that the weapons had caused 16 deaths in the north of Ireland and he predicted it was only a matter of time before people in Britain were being killed by them.

Contrary to government claims, he said that 'plastic bullets are not being used as a means of riot control but as a weapon of suppression'.

Those Labour councillors who did listen to the campaign speakers were: Angela Birtill,

Sandra Plummer, Kate Allen, Karen Newbury, Graham Good, Mary Helsdon and Adrian States. Councillor Birtill had earlier tried to include on the agenda an emergency motion banning plastic bullets. Later in the week campaign members staged a picket at the Regent Street offices of Astra Pyrotechnics, pointing out that the company still continues to produce plastic bullets for the Ministry of Defence.

Among those taking part was Emma Groves, who was blinded and suffered permanent facial disfigurement when hit by a bullet fired by an army patrol as she stood at her own living-room window.

Hundreds of people, many children among them, have suffered permanent disabilities as a result of injuries from plastic bullets.

These weapons, four inches long, made from solid PVC and weighing 4.75 ounces, are fired at a velocity of between 130 and 170 mph. They were introduced into the north of Ireland in 1973 to replace the allegedly more dangerous and less accurate rubber bullets, which had already claimed a number of victims.

In 1981, in the aftermath of the Brixton and Toxteth riots the Tory Home Secretary, Wil-

liam Whitelaw, ruled out the use of plastic bullets by British police against rioters on the grounds that their use would 'mean inflicting injury or even death of rioters'.

But he subsequently retracted this refusal to deploy such weapons and in a written reply to the House of Commons in 1982 declared: 'Some 3,000 baton rounds and 1,000 CS (gas) projectiles of approved (sic) types are now held by police forces in England and Wales for anti-riot purposes.' So far they have not been used - but what of the future?

It was this fact that prompted Jim McCabe's warning to the Camden councillors, and ultimately to all workers and young people. If anything has become clear in the last 20 years of struggle in the north of Ireland, it is the policy of successive governments to try out new methods of repression in the six counties before introducing them in Britain.

The attitude of Camden's councillors in refusing to listen to pleas for banning plastic bullets is a stark reminder of the level of indifference in Britain about what happens in the north of Ireland - a state of affairs that Thatcher's ban on Sinn Fein representatives on television is aimed at reinforcing. It must not be allowed to succeed.

An appeal to those attending the meeting 'A Memorial to the Victims of Stalin'

Dear Friends,

We in the Workers Revolutionary Party join you in honouring the memory of Stalin's victims.

The Moscow Trials and Stalin's purges sought to wipe out the Bolshevik party of Lenin, which led the October 1917 revolution and established the first working-class power in the world.

Of the Bolsheviks who survived the revolution and the wars of imperialist intervention in the 1920s, the overwhelming majority were killed by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Many were physically exterminated on the basis that they were agents of fascism.

Whilst we welcome the proposal to erect a monument to these men and women, this will not lay Stalinism to rest in the workers' movement.

In the name of glasnost and perestroika Gorbachev and the bureaucracy are 'rehabilitating' the victims of Stalinism on the one hand and using the army and police force against the workers

and youth on the other.

Only the political revolution can destroy the bureaucracy and re-establish the Soviets. Gorbachev is certainly not in favour of giving the working class the opportunity to carry through this struggle.

So many demonstrations and street meetings are erupting against the bureaucracy that new regulations have now been decreed making necessary the submission of applications for such events 10 days beforehand, and troops of the Interior Ministry have been given wide ranging powers to control demonstrations. The trade union SMOT is outlawed. Ivan Makar a young engineer is in prison - arrested after recent workers' demonstrations in Lvov.

That is why we welcome the demand from the Komsomol (Young Communist League of the USSR) against the leadership for the right to form factions and debate political issues.

It is in the light of these matters that we ask you to question the position of the 'Marxist Party'.

The Moscow Trials were based on a historical lie - that the accused were traitors to the revolution and Trotsky was a fascist agent. But the 'Marxist Party' itself is based on a lie.

In a recent article, Corin Redgrave claims that the 'Marxist Party' arose in response to 'state controlled forces who attempted to smash the International Committee of the Fourth International and the Workers Revolutionary Party in the split of October 1985', ('The Marxist', March-April 1988).

This is a lie and that is why Redgrave cannot name a single 'agent'.

The fact is - Healy and the Redgraves were expelled from the Workers Revolutionary Party, not by 'state controlled forces', but by the membership of the Workers Revolutionary Party itself, including long-standing members respected throughout the labour movement.

Peter Cox, executive member of the film technicians union is a leading member of the 'Marxist Party'; is it not his duty to expose those of us who are in leading positions in the trade union movement as being under the control of state forces if he thinks this is true?

For instance I am Secretary of the Murton Mechanics branch of the National Union of Mineworkers, and a member of the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Why does the 'Marxist Party' not tell the truth about its own origins? Because they cannot defend the actions of G. Healy who was expelled in 1985.

Healy was expelled from the WRP on three charges: (a) the use of his position as a leader for self-gratification, i.e. sexual abuse of female party members; (b) physical violence against party members; (c) slander of a leader of the American Workers' League as 'CIA agent'.

These charges were openly discussed throughout the party, and publicly explained in our paper. Healy never answered these charges. The Redgraves defended him on the grounds that 'we are neither for or against corruption'.

If the sexual abuse of communist women by Stalin's secret police chief, Lavrenti Beria - which has recently been revealed in Moscow - was unacceptable - why do the Redgraves say it was permissible on Healy's part?

No Bolshevik or Trotskyist organisation can tolerate lies, corruption or the abuse - either sexual or physical - of its members by any 'leader'. The 'Marxist Party' tolerates these things.

The truth is that, in the name of 'rehabilitation' of the victims of Stalin and Stalinism, Gorbachev and the bureaucracy use violence against the working class, youth and intellectuals who oppose them. And in the name of 'Trotskyism' the 'Marxist Party' perpetrate these methods against those who struggle to build the Fourth International against Stalinism. That is why they are not fit to organise a commemoration to Stalin's victims. That is why you must challenge them.

Yours in comradeship,

Dave Temple

(Chairman Workers Revolutionary Party Central Committee)

'Hungarian state is a Stalinist abomination'

HOW CAN workers and young people overcome the east west divide? How can they resist the impact of economic crisis on their lives?

These and many other questions arose at a discussion meeting last Friday, between members of the Hungarian League of Young Democrats ('Fidesz'), other east European oppositionists and Trotskyists of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

'The relationship between 1956, and the movement of Hungarian youth today, is like that of father and son', Zsolt Nemeth of Fidesz told the meeting - which marked the anniversary of the Soviet invasion which crushed the 1956 Hungarian workers' uprising.

When the Stalinists promised change, 'we don't believe them: that's the essence of our radicality'.

The second important principle for Fidesz members was that of tolerance. 'We want to grow as a civil society, outside the official sphere, without bothering about their machinery', said Zsolt.

The third thing was 'participation - no more elitism'. Here the 1956 workers' councils provided an example for today.

'The question of the workers' revolutions, especially 1956, and the way they were fought, is a pivotal one for the east European opposition.'

A Polish Socialist Party member, who is involved in planning an opposition conference about 'The

Future of Socialism', asked Zsolt his views on economic reform. Gorbachev wanted a Western market economy, replied Zsolt, but he did not believe this would be achieved.

Economic changes in Hungary, the USSR and the eastern countries had to be undertaken by, and controlled by, the working class, said a WRP member; we had to oppose leaving this under the control of the bureaucracy.

The Trotskyists did not accept that the Hungarian state was 'socialist': it was a Stalinist abomination.

Fundamental to our party's programme was the point that these economies, stuck between capitalism and socialism, could only go forward to socialism united with working-class power in the Western industrialised countries: the road to this unity was a revolutionary one.

The continuation of discussion and joint activity between the WRP and Fidesz was vital, said Geoff Pilling.

Differences, even deep ones, were to be expected - because of the division of Europe and the consequent division of the working class, for which Stalinism and imperialism were responsible.

Thatcher's visit to Poland was also mentioned.

The scenes in Gdansk showed that east European workers had illusions in British 'democracy', said Peter Fryer, author of 'Hungarian Tragedy' - and we had to work together to counter these.

EXPULSION OF G.HEALY - THIRD ANNIVERSARY MEETING

'THE degeneration of the WRP was a problem of the whole Fourth International', Geoff Pilling. WRP Central Committee member said opening a meeting in London on the third anniversary of G.Healy's expulsion.

'This degeneration' he said, 'could only be tackled on the basis of rebuilding the Fourth International.'

Healy was expelled for sexual abuse of comrades, for using physical violence against opponents in the movement, and for slandering D.North, secretary of the Workers League of the US. Since 19 October 1985 when the expulsions were carried out, the WRP has been attempting to get to the base of what the crisis meant', Pilling said.

'The corruption and degeneration of Healy and his supporters - such as V.Redgrave, C.Redgrave, S.Torrance and A.Mitchell - represented a profound rejection of the fundamentals of Marxism. This degeneration went to the heart of the problem that beset the whole

Fourth international' Pilling said. Healy and his supporters put forward the view that systematic physical and sexual abuse of WRP members was a 'personal matter'. But 'comrade Pilling asked 'can the liberation of humanity be achieved by these methods?'

Like the English Utilitarian philosophers, Healy and his supporters said the ends and means can be separated. This position 'leads to the outlook of slavery - fascism in the modern world.'

The issues contained in the 1985 split were of concern to the whole working class internationally. Stalinism's attack on Bolshevism was at the heart of the WRP's degeneration. This is seen by the evolution of the old WRP leadership so rapidly into the camp of Stalinism. Our main task now is the rebuilding of the Fourth International. And the development of the Preparatory Committee's centre, in particular the rebuilding of the Soviet section of the Fourth International, is primary.'