

FANS TREATED LIKE ANIMALS

FOOTBALL ID CARDS TO GO AHEAD DESPITE HILLSBOROUGH TRAGEDY

IN the days after the Hillsborough tragedy, football clubs began tearing down the steel perimeter fencing used to 'cage' supporters.

'There are cages to be seen on football grounds today...that exact on them more severe detention than we ever visited on prisoners of war in world war two,' Sheffield Labour MP Pat Duffy said in the House of Commons.

Even tabloid newspapers like the 'Daily Mirror' and 'Today' demanded the removal of the fences. But nobody dared discuss why they were there to start with: to 'contain' rival groups of football supporters, prevent pitch invasions and clamp down on 'hooligans'.

A pitch invasion has never killed anyone, of course. And it would take 'hooliganism' centuries to catch up with the casualty figures from Hillsborough, and Bradford and Ibrox before that.

But the sick society we live in contrives a picture that football supporter equals hooligan, and the solution to hooliganism is forcible detention.

Both parts of the equation are lies. 'Hooliganism', such as it is, erupts out of the desperation and hopelessness into which capitalism throws working-class youth; it feeds on long-term unemployment which no previous generation has known on this scale.

The solution is a future for young people which this society cannot supply. Steel fences make no difference to that.

On the day, the crowd was like all football crowds: thousands of ordinary working-class people, abandoning their cares for a few hours to follow their team.

The MPs, the Lords, the newspaper columnists and the senior policemen cannot understand the crowd, however, and are scared of it.

That is why for years they bayed for the supporters' blood, demanded they be caged in, and now call for them to be tagged like cattle with identity cards.

When Jacques Georges, president of the Union of European Football Associations, blamed the Hills-

BY SIMON PIRANI

borough tragedy on 'the folly of certain spectators', and called the Liverpool supporters 'beasts who wanted to charge into the arena', he was only regurgitating the prevalent perception of football supporters - and of working-class people.

He accidentally said what all the others thought - when they called for the fences, when they wrote editorials and gave cheap election speeches decrying 'football violence', when they turned football supporters into second-class citizens in the bourgeois 'public' eye.

You only have to walk into most football grounds, with their decrepit conditions and filthy toilets for which you have to queue, to see the contempt in which those who patronise the sport are held. Putting them in cages was the logical, barbaric outcome.

But the final responsibility for the horror at Hillsborough lies with the Labour council in Sheffield. The safety legislation on football stadia leave it up to the local authorities to decide how to carry it out.

It was the Labour council of Sheffield which erected the 'cages' which crushed the life out of 95 human beings - because, like all reformists, they agree fundamentally with the Tory propaganda on the nature of the working class - they are all incipient hooligans and must be treated at all times as such.

Hillsborough made no difference to the Tory government's proposals for ID cards.

Any 12-year old who goes to football knows that, since the ban on alcohol inside grounds, most supporters linger until the last minute in the nearby pubs and there is a big rush a few minutes before kick-off.

The introduction of ID cards will mean massive delays, arguments at the turnstiles, and danger of the type of panic which developed outside the Hillsborough ground -

and in the tunnel leading to the terracing, where 40 of last Saturday's victims died.

To Thatcher, Hurd, and co are not concerned about this. To them, football supporters are a suitable mass of second-class citizens, people who don't count, to try out ID cards on, before their introd-

uction on a wider scale.

They speak for capitalism, which is utterly de-humanising, under which the working-class are simply objects to be exploited.

This is the system that we in the Workers Revolutionary Party, as revolutionary communists, are fighting to put an end to.



Poll tax protesters burn their poll tax bills in Govan, Glasgow, last week-end.

Workers Press

No stomach

THE REFUSAL of the port employers to negotiate a replacement for the Dock Labour Scheme has raised the prospect of a national dock strike. As Ron Todd, Transport and General Workers' Union (T&GWU) general secretary said: 'we are poles apart on the question of negotiations.'

But far from preparing the movement for the political implications of such a strike, Todd and the labour leaders are running a mile.

That the employers have no intention whatsoever of introducing a port's scheme which will preserve the gains of the Dock Labour Scheme should have been as clear as daylight to anybody involved in a struggle against the Thatcher government.

The government's intention to scrap the Dock Labour Scheme is the result of intense pressure from the port employers who want to destroy the minimum protection given to dockers in the scheme ports which dates back to the 1947 measures introduced by the post-war Labour government.

From the outset Todd and the entire leadership of the T&GWU have sought to avoid a fight on behalf of the 9,500 dockers in the Scheme ports. By their actions they have declared that they are prepared to see them lose their rights rather than mobilise the strength of the movement against the Tory government.

Todd's desperate attempts to pretend that a political struggle against the government can be transformed into an 'industrial' dispute are as pitiful as they are treacherous.

Todd knew last week, when he proposed that the plans for a strike ballot be postponed so that talks could be held with the employers, that the employers would refuse point blank to negotiate.

Dockers and workers as a whole must take special warning from the fact that the 'broad left' on the T&GWU executive lined up with Todd in trying to avoid a strike, and stressing that any action taken would be strictly within the law. The vote to postpone action in favour of talks with the employers was carried unanimously, apart from two abstentions.

A dock strike will only take place and be successful in struggle against such leaders.

Nicholas Finney, director of the National Association of Port Employers slapped Todd in the face when he said about the breakdown of the talks:

'We have no intention of jeopardising the future prosperity of the industry...it would be absurd for us to invent new demarcation.'

Finney added: 'These are the disasters that the Government is scrapping. They deserve to stay scrapped.'

The employers made clear that they will take action at law against the union should it prepare for strike action. They will argue that a national strike would be against a statutory government decision and would not constitute a lawful trade dispute in the industrial sphere.

After Todd's first ploy failed he then went running to the conciliation service ACAS, asking them to intervene to try and prevent a strike. He soon got his answer: the employers contemptuously rejected his proposal.

None of these leaders, including those with a reputation like Todd for being on the 'left' of the movement, can face up to an all-out political battle with the government and the state. They have no stomach for the fight.

Despite Lawson's claim that British capitalism is strong enough to sustain a dock strike, such a strike would have grave implications. It would almost certainly bring a major run on sterling. The Tories have prepared a special Cabinet strike-breaking-committee should a strike occur.

Dockers must learn the lessons of the miners' strike. The trade union leaders showed that they were far more frightened of the anger unleashed in the working class during that strike than they were of the Thatcher government.

Like the 1984-85 miners' strike a dock strike will be directly political. It will be declared unlawful under the 1982 law which bans political strikes.

Victory will only be assured under a leadership that is determined to mobilise the entire strength of the working class to bring down the Tory government. There is no other way that the National Dock Labour Scheme can be preserved.

Ron Todd and his fellow lefts in the transport workers' union have already made clear that this is the last thing they want or intend.

A new leadership must be built if the trade union movement and the rights of the working class are to be defended against the attacks of the Tories.

We ask all workers to join us in building such a leadership.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

Special April Target: £7,500
In so far: £1,518.23

OUR fund is in danger!

But that means our international work and preparations for the new Workers Press are also in danger!

Every article in this week's paper speaks up to tell us the importance of fulfilling the decisions taken at the Workers Revolutionary Party conference one month ago, and announced in Workers Press the following week.

We thank the four comrades and friends who have kindly given us loans of £1,000 each to enable us to meet urgent commitments.

Our four-page flyer for the new Workers Press came out last week, and we have received many friendly, encouraging messages. There is no doubt about what we must do. Please send in your collections and donations speedily.

Dot Gibson

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 22 April
Non-stop picket 3rd anniversary rally
outside the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square, London.
2 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Sunday 23 April
Blair Peach memorial march
1 p.m. Assemble at: Southall Park, Uxbridge Rd., Southall
March to rally at Fenner Brockway Centre, South Road

Saturday 17 June
NUM Centenary gala, Yorkshire

Saturday 24 June
Workers Press miners' strike 5th anniversary event
Durham University Lecture Theatre, Old Elvet, Durham

Workers Press

WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THE
WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY



WORKERS PRESS is a revolutionary communist newspaper of the Trotskyist Fourth International. It will lead the fight of the working class against the Tory government and to defend democratic rights.

WORKERS PRESS will champion every working-class struggle against the Tory regime, its cuts, and its attacks on unions and the right to strike, immigrant communities, women, young people and the unemployed.

WORKERS PRESS will fight British oppression in Ireland and British collaboration with apartheid in South Africa.

WORKERS PRESS as the paper of the WRP will fight for leadership in the working class, against the treachery and corruption of Stalinist and reformist Labour and trade union leaders.

WORKERS PRESS has a leading part in the work of the Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists. It will report on the building of the Fourth International to destroy Stalinism, in the struggles of the working class and oppressed peoples in the Soviet Union, eastern and western Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, and throughout the world.

WORKERS PRESS will continue the columns by Peter Fryer and Tom Owen, 'Letter from Ireland', and theatre and film reviews.

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Khola Mayekiso

'We are all in the struggle'



Khola Mayekiso in London

BY DOT GIBSON

WORKERS Press spoke to Khola Mayekiso, a few hours before she flew back to South Africa.

She has been on a four-week speaking tour of Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Sweden to publicise the trial of Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades in South Africa.

Asked about the results of the tour she said: 'Everybody respon-

ded positively, with solidarity and support'.

She was emphatic that the fight in South Africa was against capitalism and for socialism - not just against apartheid.

Moses Mayekiso is on trial for sedition and subversion (treason charges have been dropped). He is general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA).

We asked Khola about the statement she made at the end of the Lambeth meeting which was:

'We know that no-one will come from heaven to fight for us. We are not on our knees - we are standing on our feet and we will fight them on our feet.'

She had felt it necessary to say this because: 'Other people think they own the struggle. But we are all in the struggle because we are all oppressed. We don't have to wait for anyone else. We must all stand up and fight for ourselves.'

'We are not in any competition with each other. If there is a pro-

test anywhere in the world, then there has to be a reason for it. In Alexandra township we decided that we must stand up and fight for our rights. If you just set out to right the wrongs then you find that you are in a fight'.

She is returning to South Africa to await the judgement in the trial of Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades which will be given on 24 April.

There will be a picket of the South African embassy on 24 April from 3 p.m - 6 p.m. organised by the Friends of Moses Mayekiso together with the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group as a response to the verdict.

Mentally ill turn to suicide

THE National Schizophrenia Fellowship have produced a book 'Slipping through the net' which details the tragedies resulting from the Tory policy of discharging mentally-ill patients into the community as psychiatric hospitals are run down.

One man took an overdose and went back to die at the hospital from which he had just been released. Another woman was killed by a car as she stood on a motorway after a hospital had refused repeated requests to accept her.

Clarke, the Tory Health Secretary, said only one or two patients missed out on support services.

This book proves the contrary.

WORKERS PRESS COMPETITION

If you see Norm, tell him



Norm is somewhere underneath the noose in this picture

IN view of the mounting inflation, the Tory assaults on the Dock Labour Scheme, unheard-of levels of privatisation, chaos in the health service, the alarming growth of no-strike deals, and the preparation of further anti-union laws, Workers Press has decided to launch a 'Find Norman Willis' competition.

For the benefit of readers who have completely forgotten he exists, Norman Willis is the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress.

While we did not expect him to actually lead a fight against the Tory government, we must admit to being surprised that in the face of the unprecedented Tory onslaught on trade unionism and all its gains, he doesn't pop up with the occasional public statement.

To enter the competition, simply write to us with reported sight-

ings of Norman Willis in public. (He is portly and should not be hard to spot.) Evidence of any statements about Thatcher's attacks, however mealy-mouthed or hollow, would be welcome.

Our judges will, however, be particularly stringent with any reported Willis sightings on picket lines. These will have to be accompanied by photographic evidence, and signed affidavits.

A final stipulation: sightings of Willis, cowering, quivering with fear, or wandering around in a distressed state, will not be valid. In the event of such sightings he should be returned immediately to Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

In the event of a tie for first place, a tie-breaker will be arranged - guessing the names of union leaders who will appear on the New Year's honours list 1990.

The anti-union laws and the P&O strike

BY PAUL HENDERSON

SALLY COSIER is secretary of Aylsham Womens' Support Group, supporting the National Union of Seamen in their strike to maintain a union at P&O Ferries.

She is the wife of a striking seaman, and as an active member of the support group, has travelled to different parts of the country, making trades unionists and others aware of the situation at Dover.

She told Workers Press that there were still 500 workers on strike and that the port at Dover is still picketed every morning.

'Thanks to our action,' she said, 'lots of people now avoid P&O, and many travel agents do not display their literature in the windows.'

'The conditions on the ships completely justify our action. There is no union membership. They have a high turnover of staff because they expect them to work a tremendous number of hours.'

'They are so short of staff that they break their own rules all the time. The other day they sacked four for being drunk on duty, but they had to take two back the next week because they had nobody to do their jobs!'

'The other week they put a boat on the wall, it's no surprise because they are so shortstaffed. It is lucky for them that when they have safety checks, they get warned a week in advance.'

Sally pointed out how the anti-union laws, and the acceptance of these by the union leaders, had been decisive in dragging the dispute out for so long.

'The union got sequestered because they tried to get the whole of the NUS out. We had a legal ballot, which was not allowed to be counted because of the laws. There is no doubt, the Tories learnt from the miners' strike. We cannot hold pickets like the miners did - we are limited to six at a time.'

'If these laws had not been brought in and accepted we could have won months ago. The union leaders say we should keep within the law, but if we do this all strikes will go the same way.'

'It seems to me that the union is its membership, we pay the wages of the union leaders, and we should decide what should be done.'

Sally concluded that the role of the Trades Union Congress had been less than helpful.

'The TUC has done nothing for us or for any other strikers.'

THE bourgeoisie in Greece is in its deepest economic and political crisis since 1974 when the junta was overthrown.

One form in which the crisis appears is the so-called Koskotas scandal.

According to publications of the bourgeois press: international finance capital, arms and drugs dealers, CIA agents, and almost the whole bourgeois political world of Greece are involved in the scandal.

George Koskotas began his activities as a crook and a gangster in the USA, and when he returned to Greece in the early 1980s, he succeeded through big swindles and with the help of government officials to develop from a simple bank clerk to ownership of a whole bank, the Bank of Crete.

Through bribing officials of public organisations he created a huge flow of capital to his bank, since all the big public organisations deposited their capital there.

Meanwhile, he created a huge publishing mechanism by buying a series of newspapers and journals, he made his own radio station, and he also bought Olympiakos, one of the biggest Greek football teams, while with unorthodox methods he effectively controlled all professional football.

When many of his illegal activities were revealed because of internal differences in the bourgeoisie, he fled to the USA to avoid arrest, with the help of people in the government. There he was arrested, and jailed, though he enjoys great privileges.

During the last six years Koskotas collaborated with and was fully supported by the pseudo-socialist government of Andreas Papandreu. Charges have been made that leading government officials and the Prime Minister himself have been bribed.

Already some important government and PASOK (Panhellenik Socialist Movement) officials are in prison while the swindler himself, behind bars, still influences political developments in Greece by making various controlled 'revelations.'

The first conclusion of the workers and peasants who follow the bourgeois press publications is that the whole bourgeois political world is rotten and corrupt - and they are right.

They are prevented from coming to the forefront of struggle because of the crisis of working class leadership (Stalinism's treacherous role, Papandreu's demagogy, and the Healyites' dirty role as Gorbachev's best advertisers in Greece.)

Meanwhile, the bourgeois press and the Stalinists say that the Koskotas scandal is just a question of bad management.

The Stalinists of the KKE (Communist Party of Greece) and the right-wing Euro-communists of the 'Greek Left' have formed a bloc for the elections, together with ex-ministers of PASOK for the modernisation of Greek bourgeois society and the bourgeois state.

This policy has caused many reactions inside the youth movement of KKE.

They all want to hide the fact that the Koskotas scandal despite its Greek peculiarities and connections, has an international context. It expresses the new stage

into which the world economic crisis has entered in the eighties, which made its appearance in the stock exchange crisis in autumn 1987.

The phenomenon of quick enrichment through illegal transactions (connivance of bankers and governments) can be seen all over the capitalist world today.

* Three years ago there was the political-economic scandal Iran-gate, in the USA

* Recently Japan was shaken by the Recruit scandal

* In France the Pechinex scandal touched Mitterand himself

* In Swiss banks we have the 'cleansing' of dirty money originating from the trading of drugs and weapons.

PASOK and the coming elections

The Pasok of Andreas Papandreu was founded on September 3, 1974, and it became a government after winning the elections in 1981 and 1985.

PASOK objectively played the role of a safety valve for the bourgeoisie, so as to block and degenerate the radical movement which developed in the working class, youth and peasantry with the overthrow of the junta on the summer of 1974.

Today PASOK is in its deepest crisis.

It has lost the important support it enjoyed for 11 years (1974-1985), inside the working class. This process started from autumn 1985, when under the orders of the IMF and the EEC the PASOK government took severe austerity measures. These caused thousands of workers who were members to abandon it, and form a centrist political-syndicalist movement SSEK, which in March was re-named the Workers' Party.

We must, of course, stress that, in the founding of this party, only a small group out of the thousands and workers and youth who abandoned PASOK participated.

The worker's life is worsening

According to information from the EEC, the position of the Greek industrial worker has been constantly worsening from 1970 until today.

The wages of workers in Greece are approximately a quarter of the average European scale

The average industrial worker in Greece had the lowest wage of all his colleagues in the EEC (except for the Portugese). Meanwhile, Greece has the highest rate of inflation of all countries in the EEC, and unemployment has taken on dramatic dimensions in recent years.

The peasants

In the agricultural areas, where about a third of the Greek population lives, opposition to the government is not yet as intense as in the urban centres - because the government managed to obtain over 1-2 trillion drachmas from the EEC treasury and gave it to the peasants.

But the agricultural co-operatives and about 900 thousand peasant families are in

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deep debt to the agricultural Bank. In spite of Papandreu's alchemies, we must expect a sudden explosion in the peasantry in the immediate future.

The working class and the election

Today the Greek proletariat has already entered a period of political crisis, theoretical criticism and searching, while it is not prepared to lose any of its conquests

Meanwhile a few members of the bourgeoisie are speaking about the danger of new 'national division' in Greece.

The issues of the betrayed Greek revolution of 1941-1949 and the question of the 1967-1974 dictatorship are again coming to the forefront in a refracted way.



BY N.ST.

STALINISM AND TROTSKYISM

A DISCUSSION FROM 'THE IRISH POST'

(This correspondence appeared in the 'Irish Post', an Irish newspaper produced in Britain for the Irish community, at the end of 1988 and beginning of 1989. Charlie Walsh is a member of the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party, and a member of the WRP Irish Commission.)

CHARLIE WALSH REPLIES TO A STALINIST

Workers' Party now devoid of any political principle

WITH REFERENCE to Seosaimh O'Brien's letter ('The Irish Post', 3 September), I must point out that the nationalism of an oppressed people and nation is always progressive against an oppressor nation such as Britain, whose nationalism of British imperialism and colonialism is reactionary through and through and always regressive.

A STALINIST ATTACKS IRISH NATIONALISM

Nationalism: romantic but bankrupt

JOHN NOLAN ('The Irish Post', 18 June) tells us that '... in 1918-1920 Sinn Fein swept the board in national, county and rural district elections, including Ulster.'

It is true that Sinn Fein won 79 out of 105 parliamentary seats in 1918 and they correctly asserted that they had a democratic mandate to demand Irish independence. However, virtually all the rest of Mr Nolan's letter is dewey-eyed, romantic nationalism.

In the 1918 election, nearly one-third of the electorate did not vote at all and Sinn Fein won 48 per cent of the votes cast.

The Sinn Fein vote was swelled by the decision of the Labour Party not to contest the election.

When the Labour Party did contest the municipal and urban elections in 1920 (elections not mentioned by John Nolan!) they won 324 seats to 422 seats for Sinn Fein and 297 seats for the Unionists.

In the 1922 Free State general election the Labour Party won 17 out of 128 seats in the new Dail, one of the party's best ever electoral performances.

In Ulster in the 1918 election, the Unionists won virtually 60 per cent of the parliamentary seats and overall their number of seats increased by almost a third.

This was, to quote Michael Farrell in 'Northern Ireland: the Orange State', 'a satisfactory result.'

Once it became obvious to the British that nationalist Ireland was behind Sinn Fein/the IRA, they had little option but to agree to talk with them.

However, it was the failure of the nationalist movement to make common cause with the Unionists that made Partition inevitable.

As the Treaty negotiations were under way, even de Valera recognised that there was no way that the Unionists could be coerced into an all-Ireland state.

John Nolan also tells us that it was Partition that caused the failure of the southern Irish economy. What nonsense.

It was not the British that forced the native Irish capitalist class to export their capital or forced the big farmers to drive the farm labourers and small farmers from the land. Rather, it was the pursuit of a selfish class interest, that was responsible.

It is probably not necessary to convince readers of 'The Irish Post' of the failures of Unionists. However, the record also shows that Irish nationalism is now also a bankrupt and divisive philosophy.

It does not provide the key to the solution to the problems in Ireland.

It is only the Workers' Party of Ireland that is telling the working and democratically-minded people in Ireland that long-term solutions are only possible when they refuse to be the cannon fodder for those classes that have already led them into the present impasse.

Seosaimh O'Brien
Clann na hEireann
Irish Workers' Organisation
London NW1
(reprinted from 'The Irish Post', 3 September 1988)

This was always the position of the great revolutionary Marxists such as Lenin and Trotsky, also the position of Engels, Marx, and of course James Connolly.

However, Connolly also saw the national question as being linked to the question of labour and socialism, but also believed in the struggle (yes, an armed struggle), hence 1916, against British imperialism, its occupation, exploitation and oppression of Ireland.

He wanted a socialist Ireland, united, free and independent from Britain, and he believed that without changing the whole economic, social and political system you would be changing nothing except the flag, from a Union Jack to a tricolour.

His slogan was that the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour (the Irish working class), while the cause of labour (the Irish working class) is the cause of Ireland.

He fought at all times to tie the national question to the question of socialism, and only understood Irish freedom and independence in the context of a 32-county socialist republic.

All of this is as true today as it was in Connolly's time. Of course, the Workers' Party and their supporters in Clann na hEireann have long ago given up any pretence of opposing or fighting, even verbally, the role of British imperialism in Ireland.

Their demand for a bill of rights and for a democratically-elected assembly (Stormont under a new name) for resolving Britain's occupation and oppression of Ireland, shows their true reactionary and pro-imperialist position on the national question and on how they see the ending of the British occupation and partition of Ireland.

They refuse to call for British withdrawal from Ireland, or to oppose any of the multitude of oppressive laws and measures, from strip-searching to shoot-to-kill, as carried out daily by the apparatus of repression occupying and oppressing the nationalist areas and, in particular, the Catholic working-class areas of the British-occupied Six Counties of Ireland.

Their demand for an elected assembly in the Six Counties shows that they now embrace

British imperialist involvement in Ireland as progressive, and that British democracy, whatever that means, can be made to work in the Six Counties.

Everyone (except the Workers' Party, it seems) knows that, after 66 years of British partition and 'democracy', there is nothing democratic, progressive or just about the entity called Northern Ireland.

Also, their demand for a bill of rights shows that they believe that the sectarian, bigoted police state, created, maintained and nurtured by British imperialism, can somehow be reformed by a bill of rights, and that the rights of the Catholic population can safely be guaranteed and protected with such a bill of rights in the face of the jackboot tyranny of British imperialism in Ireland, whether it be of a police, military or judicial nature.

This confidence in the British imperialist establishment, after 20 years of every conceivable method of repression and skulduggery practised by the police, army and judiciary in the British-occupied Six Counties against the Catholic population, shows the true reactionary, anti-working-class, anti-socialist and anti-republican nature of this Stalinist group.

This self-proclaimed workers', supposedly Marxist, party, unlike Connolly, Lenin, Marx, Engels and Trotsky, believes that British imperialism not only has a right to be in Ireland, but that it can play a progressive role there as well. Hardly a Marxist analysis of imperialism in the epoch of its decay and its disintegration!

But then, Stalinism has nothing whatsoever in common with Marxism, Marx or Lenin.

After everything from interment to the Kincora scandal, through to the strip-searching of Irish women prisoners, to the shoot-to-kill policy authorised by Thatcher and King and carried out by the SAS and other death squads, these political charlatans tell us that Britain and British imperialism still has a progressive role to play in Ireland.

Irish nationalism is, of course, only progressive while opposed to the reactionary and racist and

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STALINISM AND TROTSKYISM A DISCUSSION FROM 'THE IRISH POST'

colonialist ideology of British imperialism in its occupation, oppression and exploitation of Ireland.

However, neither nationalism nor republicanism can solve the massive economic, political and social problems existing in Ireland today.

But British imperialism, apart from having no rights, moral or otherwise, to be in Ireland, can only maintain its rule in Ireland through a police/military apparatus, operating a police state which occupies and oppresses the nationalist areas and is incapable of doing anything even remotely progressive in Ireland today.

Any Marxist worth the name would already know and understand this.

Emancipation

True emancipation of Ireland her people can only come about in a 32-county socialist republic, under the control and leadership of the Irish working class, north and south.

The struggle for national independence can only be brought to a successful conclusion if linked to the struggle for socialism in Ireland.

As a trade union member of many years' membership here in Britain, I am only too well aware of the role of the Labour Party and trade union leadership in their great quest for power, not only for the working class, mind you, but for themselves, and how they seek the well-paid positions in Labour government and in the trade union bureaucracy.

Likewise, of course, both the Labour Party and trade union leaderships have always supported the British partition and occupation of Ireland.

They are both pro-imperialist in relation to Ireland. The latest Labour Party paper on Ireland proves this.

No Labour government ever elected in Britain, or the trade

union bureaucracy, has ever fought for the working class to take power and have control over their own lives.

Socialism for the Labour Party and unions always meant, and still means, 'reforming' capitalism.

And the Workers' Party, having already abandoned Connolly's struggle, political programme and commitment to a 32-county socialist republic, independent from British imperialist interference, is likewise only interested in power for its members, whether it is in getting members elected to Dail Eireann or in getting well-paid positions in the trade union bureaucracy in Ireland.

These well-paid positions, with the perks, habits, self-importance and arrogance which go with them, have everything in common with the capitalist class which they say they are against and oppose, and nothing in common with the working class or with socialism.

The trade union bureaucracy, whether in Britain or Ireland, is the policeman for capitalism, the capitalist state and the employers.

Negotiating

Some of the Workers' Party trade unionists were part of the trade union side negotiating with Charles Haughey and the employers on the so-called plan for national recovery.

This proves that this group, like the Labour Party in Ireland, believes it has everything to gain by being loyal lieutenants of capitalism and the capitalist class in Ireland.

We should always remember that this so-called plan for national recovery has led to thousands and thousands of young Irish illegals in the USA, with thousands more in Britain, Europe and Australia.

The Workers' Party (with a bill of rights, 'democratic' elections and participating in plans for national recovery) wants to reform capitalism and imperialism, not overthrow it.

In reality, it only wants to maintain capitalism and, above all else, maintain its role within capitalist democracy.

Like the Labour Party in Britain and Ireland, it has no programme or perspective for fighting for the working class to take power and establish socialism, which is the only answer to the economic, political and social problems in Ireland.

Unlike Karl Marx, the Workers' Party is not for the overthrow of capitalism, or for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class, the prerequisite for socialism.

Collaborating

Rather is it in favour of collaborating in every possible way with the Green and Tory Catholic state in the south and with the British-created and maintained Loyalist Orange bastard state in the British-occupied Six Counties.

As long as it can get a few of its members elected to parliament, any parliament, even a revamped or renamed Stormont, it would be all right by them, and to get some more of the bureaucratic positions in the trade union movement, north and south, it is prepared to support and collaborate with capitalism/imperialism and their institutions, whether Irish or British or whether they be the Gardai, the Irish army, the RUC, the British army or the SAS.

The media image is so important to this power-seeking Stalinist group that issues like extradition, plastic bullets, strip-searching of Irish women prisoners, SAS assassinations, British occupation and sectarian attacks on, threats to and intimidation of Catholic workers at Shorts are all ignored by these political charlatans.

Presumably, to campaign on such issues would damage their new image which they have worked so hard to project as being a party of 'reasonable' and 'decent' people.

Their great quest for 'respectability' and their paranoia

that they might be considered, God help us, 'extreme', even 'subversive', stops them from taking up any of these issues.

Remember in 1981, during the heroic hunger strike of Bobby Sands and his comrades, they refused to support their demands or to campaign against Thatcher's policy of state murder.

In fact, they condemned the hunger strikers and lined up with Thatcher, the Tories, the Labour Party leaders and British imperialism in doing so.

The Workers' Party is so much into 'respectability', opportunism and reaction that it has no political principles left to sell or betray, whether they be republican principles, socialist principles, revolutionary Marxist principles or just plain anti-imperialist principles.

Even Seosaimh O'Brien must surely admit that nationalism, even bankrupt nationalism, is better than, and slightly more progressive than, being a political pawn, a running dog and a collaborator with British imperialism, in its occupation and oppression of Ireland.

Stalinist

The Workers' Party and its supporters in Clann na hEireann, in relation to the national question in Ireland, follows the classical Stalinist line, which is peaceful coexistence and co-operation with imperialism and the betrayal of the oppressed millions fighting imperialist barbarism throughout the world.

For its part, the Workers' Party has betrayed the struggle of those who have had to suffer the repressions, deprivations, deaths and tyranny in the hands of British imperialism in Ireland during the past 20 years.

Charlie Walsh
London SW1

(reprinted from 'The Irish Post', 22 October 1988)

REPLIES FROM THE DEFENDERS OF THE STALINIST 'WORKERS' PARTY'

Rambling confusion

THE RAMBLING and confused pen of Charlie Walsh (no relation) was totally wrong when he attempted to imply that the Workers' Party has abandoned Connolly's struggle ('The Irish Post', 22 October).

Its electoral success (four TDs [members of the Dail, the parliament in the 26 counties]) is a result of progressive socialist

policies and acceptance of such by today's enlightened voter.

The most recent example was the Leixlip, County Kildare, Town commissioners election, in which both Workers' Party candidates were successful and also gained the highest percentage vote of any party.

Stalinism is alive in Northern Ireland today and practised by the sectarian Provisionals, who murder those Irish who do not support them.

Charlie Walsh referred to 'the heroic hunger strike of Bobby Sands and his comrades'.

Sands was in jail following his

participation in the destruction of a furniture warehouse which resulted in workers joining the dole queue. Hardly in the Connolly tradition!

Another hunger striker, Brendan Hughes, was involved in sectarian murders of Protestants. Hardly a disciple of Wolfe Tone!

A one-time OC of the Provos in Long Kesh was Brendan McFarlane, convicted of bombing a Protestant-frequented bar.

Apparently sectarianism is rewarded with generalship in the Provo ideology.

The 1981 hunger strike could have been abandoned at any time by the Provo dictators, but their

thirst for funerals, any funerals, even of their own supporters, is Stalinism at its most extreme.

When Sean Mac Stiofain did not die for them during his 1972 hunger strike, he was demoted and ostracised, thus depriving Adams, Morrison and McGuinness of another gravestone.

The Provos and the Brits may not share the same accents and uniforms but they are both waging war on the rest of the Irish people.

Eddie Walsh
Nottingham

(reprinted from 'The Irish Post', November 1988)

STALINISM AND TROTSKYISM A DISCUSSION FROM 'THE IRISH POST'

Fundamental principles of the Workers' Party

YOUR CORRESPONDENT Charlie Walsh ('The Irish Post', 22 October) is not unique in his hatred of the humanist, republican, democratic and socialist principles of the Workers' Party of Ireland and the support group Clann na hEireann.

Indeed his diatribe, if I understand him correctly (which I find difficult), must place him the dubious company of an amazing collection of anti-Workers' Party bedfellows - extreme British and Irish Tories; all sorts of Irish nationalists, both Protestant and Roman Catholic; the CIA; MI5; and the usual sprinkling of loony, but dangerous, British, European and American organisations which claim, like dogmatic theologians, to be the one, true and legitimate interpreters of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

If they have any Irish roots they also genuflect in the direction of Connolly with a couple of well-known, selective quotes - so be it.

Your readers, if they bothered to wade through Charlie Walsh's turgid nonsense, may well be asking themselves: 'Who the hell are this Workers' Party? Are they about to take over Ireland?'

Average

Unfortunately, the answer to the latter question is no - they average three per cent of popular support in Northern Ireland and five per cent in the Republic. Though in the recent elections, in Leixlip, County Kildare, the party topped the poll with 21 per cent of the vote, returning two councillors.

As for the first question - in terms of shared goals, the answer is simple: we stand for a democratic, secular, socialist state - a republic.

Let me say, with some pride, that that is a political message which the Workers' Party has brought to virtually every home on the island of Ireland.

The party does not shirk the onerous task of seeking democratically, without subterfuge or violence, to win all our people to the vision of a society created by the vast majority, the workers, in the interests of that majority.

It is central to our shared philosophy and tradition to do just that - we subscribe to fundamental unshakeable principles - the unity of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter and the ownership of Ireland by the people of Ireland. Your readership will be aware of the location of those two principles.

In a period of rampant

individualism and virulent murderous nationalism, that is neither an easy or popular position to maintain. But maintain it and advance it, we do and we will.

And, yes, we also pursue all its implications.

Labour

For example, we support the British Labour movement - its party and its associate organisations.

We desire and are working for the comprehensive defeat of Thatcherism, its immoral philosophy of greed, its destruction of humanism, its elevation of 'me' above 'us' and its constant promotion of the basest inhuman instincts.

(Many such ideas find ready acceptance among the Irish middle class here in Britain. Naturally, they also are enemies of the Workers' Party). We absolutely reject, oppose and condemn terrorism. That is the correct description for the barbarous sectarian murders of the IRA/UDA/UVF/INLA.

The suggestion that the IRA are 'legitimate freedom fighters' and the UDA/UVF 'illegitimate reactionaries' is an obscenity.

What political categories are people employing who make such a division? What moral standards do they hold?

The IRA 'advance the cause of Irish freedom' with the murder of 21-year-old Fermanagh girl Gillian Johnston; and the UDA 'defend Loyalism against treachery' with the murder of pensioner Victor Rainey.

Naturally they both apologised for their 'mistakes'. The Workers' Party has made its position clear about terrorism. We insist that there can be no 'ifs' or 'buts'.

Anyone with the slightest sympathy for democracy, for political struggle in Ireland, for the cause of workers' unity, must surely agree with this.

Or are we being asked to accept that such atrocities as the Kingsmill massacre, la Mons Hotel, the slaughter of the Miami Showband, or McGurks Bar, to name but a few Nazi-style acts for which the IRA/UDA/UVF/INLA have been responsible, are morally justifiable, in the name of 'freedom' or 'loyalism'?

Naturally, people like Charlie Walsh will lay the blame for these atrocities at the door of British imperialism.

Stripped of its lurid rhetoric this is the old 'if only' argument - if only there had not been partition or the Famine or the Elizabethan plantations or the Pope's recognition of the British monarchy's claims... where does one stop?

The Workers' Party has faced up scientifically and rigorously to this question and come up with the relatively simple answer: let's

begin with reality, a reality understood in terms of a genuinely revolutionary perspective and genuinely revolutionary political goals.

There are two states in Ireland. Each is equally legitimate and no amount of half-baked pseudo-socialist jargon can alter that reality.

The Workers' Party is intent upon changing that, as I have pointed out in the opening paragraph. They expanded on that fact in the document 'The Case for Devolved Government in Northern Ireland', with the following:

'Our purpose is to transcend these aspirations (i.e. of Nationalists and Unionists) with a greater unity, that of the working class on this island, within these islands and throughout the world. If this is to be achieved, the realities of the present situation must be faced.

'The existence of two states, north and south, is a reality and they cannot be bombed out of existence or wished out of existence, and that historical, cultural and religious divisions have given rise to the present situation, including the terror gangs also cannot be ignored'. (Executive Political Committee, the Workers' Party, April 1985).

Let me also put some flesh on the bones of this position.

There are a million Protestant people in Northern Ireland. The Workers' Party sees them as fellow citizens, not some alien group to be coerced into 'freedom'.

Criminal

As far back as 1972, Tomas Mac Giolla, then president of the party, pointed out the criminal character of trying to bomb the Protestant population of Northern Ireland into a republic and the absolutely nonsensical character of suggesting that they could be bombed into a socialist republic.

The Workers' Party has faced up to the realities of modern Ireland with all its warts - the medieval nature of much of our society, the denial of human liberties in the Republic, the massive unemployment in both states, the ongoing sectarianism and terrorism, the dominance of Anglo-American imperialism and its associated philosophy of personal gain and private affluence; these are but some of the problems being confronted.

The party is being built on firm, democratic, humanist and socialist principles.

The work being done to win the population to a vision of a new, more humane society, is slow and painstaking.

Terrorism is, in fact, counter-revolutionary, because it hinders that work, creates further disunity and depends sectarian divisions in



James Connolly

Northern Ireland.

The Workers' Party marches under the banner of liberty, equality and fraternity, not the black flag of death.

It seeks with workers in Britain to achieve our goals and their goals - that will probably sicken Charlie Walsh and others who think like him.

They, like the Provisionals, offer little or, to be more correct, they offer death, destruction, disunity and the perpetuation of the very evils they claim to oppose.

The Workers' Party has learned well the lessons of history. It is unfortunate that Charlie Walsh cannot benefit from the experience.

Seamus Collins
Handsworth, Birmingham
(reprinted from 'The Irish Post',
November 1988)

A tirade with no explanation

ARE WE to conclude from Charlie Walsh's lengthy tirade against the Workers' Party ('The Irish Post', 22 October) that the only organisations in Ireland who are not collaborating with the British imperialism are the Provisional IRA and the INLA?

If we are, he could have spent more ink explaining how bombing school buses and murdering Protestant dustmen in County Fermanagh is fighting against British imperialism.

Perhaps some of the literary fury would have been taken out of him, down there in south-east London, if he had had the job I had some years ago in Linniskillen - that was cleaning bomb victims' entrails from overhead wires.

Terry Buchanan
Muswell Hill, London N10
(reprinted from 'The Irish Post', November 1988)

STALINISM AND TROTSKYISM A DISCUSSION FROM 'THE IRISH POST'

Apologists for imperialism

IN MY recent letter regarding the Workers' Party I accused the party of opposing the position held by James Connolly - that the struggle for national independence can only be successfully concluded if it is united with the struggle for socialism in Ireland. In their replies, correspondents, far from answering this point, content themselves with simply launching tirades of abuse.

In no way is this the case of my 'genuflecting in the direction of Connolly with a couple of well-known selective quotes', as claimed by Seamus Collins.

During all of his political life, Connolly fought for the idea that the national and social struggle were inexorably bound together.

He warned repeatedly that partition by imperialism would divide the working class in Ireland, and believed that socialism could only be achieved in Ireland by means of the revolutionary struggle of the working class.

The Workers' Party takes the opposite position. Seamus Collins says 'there are two states in Ireland which are equally legitimate'.

This is nothing short of an apology for British imperialism which partitioned and continues to occupy and oppress Ireland.

Seamus Collins quoted a Workers' Party statement which says that these two states are the result of 'historical, cultural and religious divisions'. This is quite simply nonsense.

This is not to suggest that such divisions never existed. Far from it! What is true, however, is that imperialism took advantage of these divisions, after first helping to bring them about.

It 'capitalised' on these divisions and used them as the tools to maintain its grip upon the most prosperous part of Ireland.

Is it not also true that members of the Conservative Party, such as Carson, organised an armed revolt against parliament to ensure partition?

It should be pointed out to Seamus Collins, and those who think similarly, that Carson had no respect whatsoever for the 'legitimacy' of British 'democracy'!

And isn't it true that the 26-county state was founded because it suited most of the southern capitalists at the time?

So what 'legitimacy' can either of these states have from a working-class socialist point of view?

While we are talking about the 'legitimacy' of states, I would point out that is part of the ABC of Marxism that a state in any society constitutes an 'armed body of men' which protects and defends the interests of the ruling class.

Today when capitalism stands in the way of all human progress, no capitalist state can be 'legitimate' - and that certainly includes both the states in Ireland.

As far as Marx, Engels, Lenin

and Trotsky - and Connolly - were concerned, every capitalist state was a 'legitimate' target for revolutionary overthrow by the working class.

'The Workers' Party has faced up to the realities of modern Ireland', declares Seamus Collins.

He means, of course, that the Workers' Party accepts Ireland as it is - partitioned. But this is only a repetition of a Stalinist line.

Gorbachev accepts that there is 'one world, two systems' and workers who are suffering under capitalism will just have to get used to it.

Seamus Collins says Irish workers must accept the 'reality' of partition and forget about national self-determination.

Gorbachev says Latvia, Lithuania and Armenia must forget about the national self-determination denied them by Stalin.

I criticised the Workers' Party for having rejected the Marxist principles of supporting the right to

CHARLIE WALSH REPLIES TO THE DEFENDERS OF STALINISM

self-determination of oppressed nations and of supporting the right of the oppressed to fight back. None of those who attack me in 'The Irish Post' addresses this point.

They talk about 'democracy' but say nothing about this most fundamental democratic right, the right of a nation to determine its own future, free from imperialist interference.

Instead of addressing this point, Seamus Collins screams abuse, accusing me of wanting to 'bomb the Protestant community into a republic', of being in the 'company of Tories, the CIA, and MI5', along with being a 'dangerous loony' to boot.

This is the sort of slander which usually typifies a Stalinist organisation. I would like to tell Seamus Collins that these sort of slanders - which were so commonplace in the 1930s when Stalin used his murder machine to try and crush the Trotskyists, to wipe out tens of thousands, even millions, of Communists because they opposed his line - are completely discredited today.

Far from being a 'loony', I came to London from Kilkenny in 1971. I am a Trotskyist and a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party

(Workers Press), and I have also been a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union over nearly 11 years.

I try to support and defend the working class and its organisations in Britain, Ireland and internationally, who are fighting against imperialism, capitalism and Stalinism.

In doing so I hold no brief for, or allegiance to, the pro-imperialist Labour and trade union leadership who collaborate with the Tories and imperialism in supporting the partition, occupation and oppression of Ireland who have also betrayed the struggle for socialism on both sides of the Irish sea.

Eugene Egan comments on the Workers' Party's hypocrisy when it comes to talking about violence.

The fact is that, having declared a ceasefire, the Official IRA (the forerunner of the Workers' Party) continued to use violence - not against British imperialism but against their political opponents.

That's Stalinism, not socialism.

Eddie Walsh, defending the Workers' Party's refusal to lift a finger in support of the Republican hunger strikers, tells us that Bobby Sands destroyed a furniture warehouse and workers lost their jobs as a result, and that this was 'hardly in the Connolly tradition'.

Well, I would like to remind Eddie Walsh that James Connolly took up the gun too - in the Irish Citizens' Army, first to defend workers' picket lines and then in struggle against the capitalist state; in an attempt to strike a blow for Irish freedom, Connolly commanded the GPO as a military headquarters in 1916.

I would like to ask Eddie Walsh: was Connolly responsible for the loss of postal workers' jobs after the GPO was bombarded and smashed by British artillery?

And is he also to be blamed for all the deaths and injuries to Dubliners which resulted from the ensuing battles between the 1916 insurgents and the British crown forces?

I believe that the struggle of the working class is the means of defeating British imperialism and establishing socialism in Ireland.

But that struggle will not be 'peaceful'.

As for Seamus Collins drawing an equals sign between the IRA and Loyalist paramilitaries, this is ludicrous and dishonest.

Even Margaret Thatcher knows the difference. That is why she witch-hunts Father Patrick Ryan and imposes censorship on Sinn Fein, a legal organisation, while she allows the UDA, a military organisation with a reputation and history of sectarian murders, to remain legal.

The republican movement (both its military and political wings), contrary to what Seamus

Collins thinks, is not at war with the Protestant community but with British imperialism and its institutions.

The Loyalist paramilitaries are right-wing neo-fascist groups, whose sinister and declared aim is the sectarian killing of Catholics, simply because they happen to be Catholics, and for no other reason.

The British security chiefs know that the Loyalist paramilitaries can and have been used on the state's behalf to carry out atrocities against the republican movement and against ordinary civilians.

The Miami Showband massacre, the bombing of Dublin and Monaghan in 1974 and other killings carried out by Loyalist groups had close co-operation with members of the RUC, UDR and British intelligence. Fred Holroyd, a former British intelligence officer, has stated as much.

The Loyalist paramilitaries also have known links with fascist and neo-fascist groups in England, Scotland and in other parts of Europe.

These Loyalist paramilitaries are a proxy for the British state forces in many respects.

Loyalism is a reactionary political force through and through. Irish nationalism, despite its many shortcomings, is progressive in comparison.

Sectarianism is the hallmark of British imperialism, divide-and-rule tactics in Ireland, and is nurtured by its continuation.

Sectarianism and the division within the Irish working-class movement along geographical and religious lines will have to be faced up to and confronted by Marxists and socialists in Ireland.

But is it just a case of uniting the working class in Ireland and all other problems will disappear? I don't believe so.

To ignore the role of imperialism (aided and abetted by the Irish bourgeoisie) in partitioning Ireland - as the Workers' Party does - is to avoid facing up to the fight.

The national question will only be solved by the revolutionary struggle of the Irish working class against capitalism and its state, and can only be brought to a successful conclusion with the establishment of socialism in Ireland.

Socialism is on the agenda now, not later, and is relevant and necessary for the majority of Irish people (emigration, unemployment, poverty and the lack of progressive social policies are all proof of this).

Yet the relevance and necessity of socialism will have to be fought for by a Marxist leadership - and such a leadership will be based on principles exactly opposite to those of the Workers' Party.

Charlie Walsh
(reprinted from 'The Irish Post', 21 January 1989)

LETTERS

Write to : Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

More precision on Chartists

YOUR article on the Chartist heritage, (15 April), is correct to point to the 'vital revolutionary, political and theoretical heritage for the British working class'. But more precision is required in certain areas.

There were some factual errors, (O'Connor died in 1855 not 1852), but the real questions are ones of emphasis. Trotsky argued that Chartism was especially significant in trying every tactic open to the workers' movement, from petition through General Strike to armed insurrection.

But within this there was division by class and politics. O'Connor was able to overcome most of these divisions up to 1848, but in doing so pursued a 'centrist' strategy (the point is developed in Reg Groves's 'We Shall Rise Again' regrettably long out of print).

That is to say he always urged militant action, but when the time came failed to give it leadership but instead equivocated.

Leadership was a key problem for the Chartists. So while it is true that after 1848, (and here the article seriously understates the depth of the Chartist challenge in the summer of that year), Chartism swung to the left under the leadership of Harney and then Jones, its support was much reduced.

By 1851 when the Chartist Party the National Chartist Association adopted a fully social democratic programme, its support was numbered not in the tens of thousands but in a few thousand only.

The key thing about late Chartism after 1848 was that it managed to continue for another 10 years in increasingly difficult circumstances.

Thus while for a number of reasons, not the least of which was, regrettably, sectarianism, Chartism did finally collapse, a new generation of activists had been developed.

It was these, small groups and individuals, who carried on the ideas of socialism, through the First International into, 20 years later, the Social Democratic Federation.

In the meantime, hopes of an independent workers party were raised, (as with the Reform League agitation in the late 1860s), only to be dashed again and again.

But the importance of that small minority who stood against the stream in the 1960s and 1970s should not be underestimated.

Finally, the article makes no mention of the role of women in Chartist activity. It was considerable and should not be ignored.

Keith Flett
Tottenham

RISIS EECE elections

But the KKE tries to cover up all these important issues in perfect collaboration with the right-wing party of New Democracy, speaking about the overcoming of the civil war and calling for national acquiescence on the important questions of the country!

The right wing

Thus the Stalinists give Papandreou the chance to agitate and appear as the most fanatic enemy of the right-wing New Democracy party, whose leader is Constantine Mitsotakis.

New Democracy today is the traditional right-wing bourgeois party in Greece and it aims to win the elections in June this year.

It fanatically supports neo-liberalism,



Thatcherism, the necessity to cut on social expenditure, to give more motives to the bourgeoisie etc.

Aware that the application of its programme will cause a revolutionary explosion, New Democracy is trying to prepare itself and that's why it has started flirting with the Stalinist KKE which is used by the bourgeoisie to damp down the working class.

A big danger

The Stalinists, having effectively stopped their criticism against Mitsotakis, are opening the way for various nationalists within PASOK to agitate and say that left and right are the same thing, and make as their banner the nation, the state, and 'socialism'.

In Greece, historically, there has never existed a formed, mass, fascist movement, but the treacherous role of Stalinism and the possible electoral sinking of PASOK open the way to it, unless the working class comes to the forefront after the elections which is what all the bourgeoisie fear.

The bourgeoisie

Lately, important re-arrangements are occurring within the bourgeoisie itself. The leadership of PASOK tried to establish ties with the socialist new bourgeoisie. This caused internal clashes within the ruling class and that's how the Koskotas scandal broke out.

In the last 2 years around 100 important enterprises, mostly operating in the field of foodstuffs and agricultural products have been bought by international trusts.

Another tendency is the unification of scattered industrial units so as to free the competition which will come in 1992 and the so-called 'European Unification'. The strategy of the bourgeoisie in Greece in view of 1992 demands national acquiescence, class peace, productivity of labour and attacks on the trade unions and democratic rights of the working class.

Today the bourgeoisie in Greece needs a new form of bourgeois rule and is prepared for it.

The crisis of the state

The economic and political crisis in Greece is reflected in the bourgeois state itself. A few months ago in Athens and Salonica we had demonstrations of policemen demanding trade union rights. The caste of officers is divided almost openly between right wingers and PASOKists which keep arguing.

One of the immediate needs of imperialism in Greece is to put the state mechanism itself in order. This is today in its deepest crisis since 1949 when, thanks to the Stalinist betrayal, it won the guerrilla movement.

The elections in June 1989 will not be the beginning of a new four-year term of constitutional governing but the beginning of an epoch of tough, final clashes. The conditions for the development of the struggle for the rebuilding of the Fourth International are extremely favourable.

Alexandra Kollontai

ICA Theatre, London until 22 April.
Alexandra Kollontai by Barbara Ewing.

ONE OF the three most brilliant orators of the October Revolution, Alexandra Kollontai was the only woman on the Bolshevik Central Committee when it decided on the uprising.

Beyond her statement that 'the personal is the political', this one-woman play about Kollontai's life does not attempt a political analysis of this leading revolutionary,

But in the hour and three-quarters when Barbara Ewing is on stage the contradictions of her life and backdrop of vast historical events are brought burning alive.

Born into a liberal bourgeois family, Alexandra Kollontai was shattered when she visited a textile factory with her husband and saw for the first time the conditions of the 12,000 workers and their families in the factory compound.

She decided to leave her husband and son and enroll at Zurich university. She joined the revolutionary movement and worked for the party both internationally and inside Russia. She returned from exile after the February 1917 Revolution and participated in all the events leading up to the taking of power in October.

While she was Commissar of Social Welfare in the revolutionary government, some of the most advanced legislation ever was passed on women's rights: divorce, maternity conditions and the family.

She resigned from this post because of her opposition to the Brest Litovsk treaty, but her



skill as an agitator and writer of popular political pamphlets was called into action again during the war of intervention by British, Italian and French armies. Her experience among peasant women led her to insist on an all-Russian congress of working and peasant women.

The party grudgingly agreed, expecting 80 delegates: well over 1,000 arrived despite journeys through war zones. She spoke to the women delegates about a future where women could depend on society and not on a man for material needs so that love between two persons could be a relationship between two independent equals.

When the Women's Department was set up in Moscow Kollontai was the best person to head it. Abortion was regrettably legalised as a right, despite the need to replace the 11 million lives lost in the wars and famine. But Kollontai's support for the syndicalist Work-

ers' Opposition again led to her disfavour.

This and the ending of the turbulent relationship with her second husband — former Kronstadt sailor and military commander Pavel Dybenko, 15 years her junior — put her on the sidelines.

Many in the party leadership felt she was politically unreliable, that she confused her personal life with political principles. She also embarrassed them with her championship of social changes for women and the family.

They (like herself, as she bitterly discovered) were not yet the new men and women of communist society. She often came up against backward political reactions of party members both to her personal life and to the huge political issues she battled on.

Stalin too felt she was unreliable and sent her abroad as an ambassador: because of her standing as a revolutionary she was best out of the way. She spent most of the rest of her long life as a diplomat, during which time virtually all the legislation on women was reversed.

Kollontai survived the purges because of this final 'exile' — and also because she rewrote sections of Bolshevik history at Stalin's behest, including a denunciation of her beloved husband Dybenko.

This play portrays a complex life extremely vividly. Not a revolutionary theoretician like her contemporary and friend Rosa Luxemburg, Kollontai cannot be lightly dismissed. Nor can we allow the inveterate syndicalists of the SWP to claim her as their own.

Clare Cowen

AS I SEE IT BY TOM OWEN

Animal Farm

ON thinking over the 'media events' of the last week or so, I am more and more reminded of the climax of Orwell's Aesopian satire on the rise of Stalinism, Animal Farm.

You recall that at the end of the novel, the pigs who had formed the leadership of the animals' co-operative became indistinguishable from the humans.

'No question now what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man and from man to pig and from pig to man again but it was impossible to say which was which.'

My confusion in the Grand National remained purely at an Aesopian level, confusing donkeys with horses. But in the case of the much publicised Gorbachev visit, the Orwellian confusion went much deeper.

Watching the extended news broadcast of Gorbachev and the fashion-besotted Raisa visiting Windsor Castle you became more aware of yourself as a 'creature outside' watching in, unable to distinguish between the pigs and humans.

The leader of a 'socialist' state, the 'inheritor' of the 'tradition of October 1917' and the head of the so-called world 'communist' movement being led round a feudal heap by Ms. E. Windsor, was the source of some stunning historical ironies and for many people no doubt some bitter confusion.

The Gorbachevs politely nodded with interest as the English monarch drooled over medieval swords, daggers and pig stickers.

Two steps behind the 'official' heads of state entourage, of course, was Thatcher, demonstrating again that she was amongst that unique breed of politician that can smirk, snarl, grimace and walk on two legs.

As the party retired to their private trough, Dimpleby II remarked on the portrait gallery of Kings, Generals, Tsars and Archdukes. Dimpleby delicately made the point that a number of Tsars and Archdukes had had to be 'put down' by the revolutionary movement in the 19th and 20th century.

He also mentioned the quaint

practice of turning the shields of disgraced families to the wall, and then spoke in glowing terms of the co-operation of the English and Russian people during the Napoleonic wars.

One wonders how the gallery would be presented during a French presidential visit. No doubt some princeling would whisper, to paraphrase the Lancashire music hall song, 'turn the Archduke's picture to the wall mother'.

On the subject of royal offspring, the next big media event was the affair of the stolen letters, the Princess and the equerry.

This affair is shot through with Orwellian confusions. My dictionary definition of equerry even suffers from it, 'Equerry, a stable, a shed is confused with L. equus, horse n. An officer having care of horses and nobles and princes'.

This confusion of role definition seems to be shared with the 'Palace' who according to the 'Daily Mirror' defined the job as 'something between a lady-in-waiting and a private secretary'.

The Mirror itself seemed to have been unsure about the whole business; it lamented that the whole sorry mess could only bring bad publicity to the monarchy but then spent four full pages of its Monday edition on the break up of a royal marriage.

The 'Sun' which had copies of the letter seems to have suppressed its populist republican tendencies and concentrated on the Grand National winner.

All this public role confusion must have unsettled the 34-year-old Commander and Durham geography graduate.

The princess and her husband were, it was said, miles apart. Both it is said were playing with their horses.

I suppose we should understand that under the circumstances, it is to be expected that there would be some speculation as to whether the 'intimacies' of the secret letters were directed to the princess or to one of her many horses.

Besides which we know of that rich folkloric tradition of princes and princesses turning into frogs and other dumb beasts.

But the deeper Orwellian link was to be found in the Daily Mirror's explanation of the equerry's duties,

'Until this weekend's disclosures, Commander Lawrence was the equerry all the Royals knew and trusted.'

As recently as Friday, millions saw him on TV standing behind the Queen when she received Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev at Windsor Castle.'

Grand opera made great

THE contrast could scarcely have been greater. Last year Glasgow's old transport museum, one of the latest and perhaps the most original of theatre-spaces in Britain, opened with Peter Brook's day-long production of the Hindu epic 'The Mahabharata'.

This year, in the same space in the same month, it is Brook again; but with Georges Bizet's opera 'Carmen' made down to a spare 90 minutes or less and performed by four singers, three actors and 15 musicians.

Striking though the differences are between the two productions - between East and West, antiquity and modernity, length and brevity, breadth of vision and depth of insight - a common purpose shines through.

It is not a simple matter to put it convincingly into words.

But it has something to do with the idea that each production is at the same time the thing itself, it is what matters and it is for that evening, for that audience and for those performers; and it is also part of a continuing commentary on the very nature of theatre and its essential part in the past, present and future of human culture.

'La Tragedie de Carmen' was first staged in 1981 at Theatre Bouffes du Nord, the Paris base of Le Centre International de Creations Theatrales (CICT), which Brook founded with Micheline Rozan in 1971. CICT sought, and seeks to study and explore drama, its sources and modes of expression, from all over the world.

It is a multi-national organisation, and Brook's productions tend to involve multi-national casts.

Two different sets of performers will be involved in the Glasgow run of 'Carmen', which lasts until 30 April. One can be sure that, though the essentials will be the same, the experience will be different at each performance.

Indeed the only frustrating thing for the ordinary theatre-goer about Brook's work is that, having seen it once and begun to adapt to the surprise of it, one wants to see it again and again.

For opera buffs, it must be reported that this is a 'Carmen' without chorus, that the small orchestra is tucked away back-stage behind 'wings' consisting of brick walls left over from the building's previous function, and that evening dress will make

theatre

you look very out of place.

But the singing (which I am, alas, unqualified to describe in detail) is fine, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra is good form, and the acoustics in this super 'theatre' quite extraordinary.



Cynthia Clarey as Carmen in Peter Brook's production of 'La Tragedie de Carmen'

For irregular attenders at opera, or those who think it is only for the aristos or the experts, maybe this is for you. For Brook, in reducing 'Carmen' to its essentials - he, and his collaborators Jean-Claude Carriere, designer Chloe Obolensky and technical director Jean-Guy Lecat, have gone back to Prosper Merimee's novel as well as adapting Bizet's original opera of 1875 - presents something of the essence of all opera.

The production is very much for today; yet it contrives to give a sense of the time in Italy when opera singers were as popular as bull fighters in Spain or football players in Glasgow.

The singers, instead of vying with a large orchestra placed between stage and audience, become the instruments of music which flows through them from behind, acquiring a higher level of humanity as it does so.

The props are minimal, the performing arena is a sandpit. And as the lovers fight and die in the wake of the fatal sexuality which is the core of Carmen's being in a society of over-promoted men, the sand really flies.

Unlike 'The Mahabharata', there is no water in this production. But the other ancient elements are there, for, in addition to earth and air, fire lends mystery to the Spanish gipsy atmosphere in which circles and death-foretelling cards transport us through Carmen's uncompromising fight for freedom - which is in constant tension with her belief that fate determines all.

To live is to struggle for freedom, and, in Carmen's world to be able to conduct that struggle is to be enslaved - to the flashy bullfighter, who dies in the ring, to the jealous lover who, if he cannot have her, must kill her. To live is to die. 'Free I was born and free I shall die,' she sings.

If it is true, as David Williams points out in the CICT text of the work, that Carmen's behaviour cannot shock us today as it would have done in 1875, her story, in this modern adaptation, has certainly not lost its capacity to move us to feel and to reflect.

To reflect on the content of the tale to be sure; but also on the nature of opera itself; and the capacity, in the context of the struggle for a truly human society, for this supreme achievement of bourgeois culture to become a genuinely liberating and popular art.

Terry Brotherstone

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News briefs . . .

Shoot-to-kill

ARMED police of unit PT17 were trained to fire at a subject's body after a warning because it was 'nonsense' to believe they could shoot at the gun-hand, Detective Chief Inspector Michael Waldren told a Lambeth inquest on Anthony Ashe, 49, of Peckham Rye.

Ashe was shot in the throat in a robbery at Bejam's store in Woolwich in 1987.

Electronic tagging

THREE magistrates courts - Tower Bridge, Nottingham and North Tyneside - have been chosen for an experiment in the electronic tagging of defendants.

The project involves fitting an electronic bracelet to defendants on remand to monitor their movements.

Tower Bridge was chosen because the Home Office believes there will not be a disproportionate number of black people tagged there.

Desperation of Rumanians

THE MASTER of a Norwegian tanker stood by powerless while Rumanian officials, dockers and soldiers, 'desperate' for unobtainable goods, stripped his vessels of food, clothing and consumer items. Officials threatened to have the ship arrested if he did not supply them, the captain said. 'They called our ship a present from heaven.'

More than 26,000 Romanians have sought refuge from hardship under President Ceausescu by fleeing to Hungary over the past two years, according to Hungarian Peace Council figures.

Burgess shows his contempt

'THE British are a violent people. Their history has been partly a chronicle of the subduing of violence. Ironically, games such as association football were once considered a surrogate for the aggression of civil war or of colonisation of reputedly barbarous territories. We see now that this is not so.

'If the educated can achieve their catharses through listening to Beethoven or watching Hamlet, the proletariat can only purge themselves of their baser instincts through an entertainment that arouses group solidarities and unleashes bellicosity.' - Anthony Burgess, author of 'The Clockwork Orange' and Roman Catholic, commenting on the Hillsborough Disaster.

Black woman left to die

A black South African woman died when left in the wreck of her car, while two white victims of the head-on crash in Orange Free State were airlifted to hospital relatives said. When an ambulance for blacks arrived five hours later Mrs Irene Mzizi was dead.

BLAIR PEACH



Celia Stubbs

BY SIMON PIRANI

'THE labour movement, and all progressive people, have to take on board the fact that racism is central to British politics,' Suresh Grover told a press conference last week to honour the memory of anti-fascist Blair Peach, who was killed by the police ten years ago.

'At present the labour movement is not taking this centrality into account,' said Grover, a member of the Southall Monitoring Group which along with black, community and other organisations is staging a Memorial March for Peach this Sunday (see 'Dates for your Diary').

'People who suffer racist attacks have a right to self-defence; communities have a right to self-defence. This is one of the keynotes that will have to be brought out.

'Remember, it's not just a problem of people being attacked on the streets,' added Grover. 'It is a question of attacks on people's homes - and in these cases they should be able to call on all sorts of resources.'

Unmesh Desai of Anti-Fascist Action said the march hoped to highlight four points: the sheer level of racist attacks - 70,000 recorded in the last year, with a particularly rapid deterioration of the situation in towns like Edinburgh with small black communities; the growth of fascism and links between fascist groups across Europe; the growth of organised fascist activity around football grounds; and 'legalised

thuggery' from the police against black people.

Chris Searle, a teacher and former colleague of Blair Peach, reminded the press conference of the 'brutal and clinical' manner of Peach's death - he was clubbed to death by a member of the Special Patrol Group. But he urged that his life, as a trade union and anti-racist activist, and a teacher, should also be remembered.

A collection of poems edited by Searle, 'One for Blair', has been launched to co-incide with the tenth anniversary of Peach's death.

Blair Peach's companion, Celia Stubbs, spoke of the legal battles to establish who had killed Peach, which resulted in the Metropolitan Police paying damages to Blair's brothers in New Zealand rather than have the matter raised in court.

Consequently no-one has ever been charged with causing Blair's death.



Chris Searle

Indian dockers on strike

BY ROY ANDERSON

BRITISH dockers can draw strength from a mass walkout in the Indian docks on Monday, which is threatening to cripple the country's economy. 125,000 dockworkers walked out following the breakdown of 15 months of negotiations over wages.

The Port and Dockworkers Federation (A federation of 4 major docks unions) called the stoppage in support of a 28% wage claim. The government is offering 15.1%.

DUNDEE POLL TAX CAMPAIGN

BY ANDY MCFARLANE

AS the poll tax payments demands arrive in Dundee, the Anti-Poll Tax Unions Non Payment campaign held two large meetings in the city's Hilltown and Ardler areas.

In the Hilltown meeting there was a different emphasis on who should lead. Some say councillors and 'official' leaders, for example the Scottish TUC, others say those hard hit in the working class should lead, and

Massacres in Iran

BY BOB ARCHER

GROUPS in Britain are continuing to campaign against repression by the reactionary regimes in Iran and Iraq.

50 British, Iranian and Turkish demonstrators recently picketed London's UN Information Office to highlight the treatment of political refugees from the region.

The Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) has published a news bulletin with information about class struggles in Iran and the plight of Iranian opponents of the Islamic regime both at home and abroad. (Available from BM CARI, London WC1N 3XX, price 50p.)

The bulletin has taken a firm line in defence of author Salman Rushdie against the regime's death threat.

It says that 106 Iranian refugees who had managed to get to the Turkish area of Cyprus were returned to Iran last summer. This was after repeated attempts to find sanctuary in Yugoslavia and even in a Cypriot monastery. Their fate is at present not known.

Amnesty International has condemned the Turkish government for handing Iranian political refugees back to the Iranians. In the worst case, 58 refugees were handed over and instantly machine-gunned by the Pashdar guards.

There will be a public meeting organised by the campaign on Saturday April 22 at 7.30p.m. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

In a bid to beat the strike the government is using the Navy and Territorial Army to unload essential imports. But no provision has been made to load exports and with 95% of the country's trade handled by the dockers the Federation is in a strong position. Official estimates concede that there is only enough coal to last for 25 days.

At this stage dockers have strong support throughout India. Even the Indian National Trades Unions Congress which is controlled by Rajiv Gandhi's Ruling Congress Party, has backed the strikers.

recruit backing from trade unions and councillors. One trade unionist revealed this had not been discussed in his union or workplace.

A Scottish Nationalist councillor spoke on the platform, then he left not allowing questions on his party line which is to delay payment until the last minute - and then pay.

Leaflets will be distributed and nonpayers are being asked to burn their payment books in a protest in the city square. There are plans for a trade union school locally and a national one in Edinburgh on the 27th May.