

The Soviet Union: Trotskyism lives!

by Geoff Pilling

What happened to the generation that led the October revolution? Why were they butchered and tortured to death? are the real questions Afanasyev is asking.

the grounds that both the teaching and the books used in the teaching were full of historical lies.

Trotskyism alone provides the key to answering the historical questions now pre-occupying sections of the intelligentsia and the

LAST week's call from a leading Soviet academic for the rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky proves that, despite all their past and present efforts the Stalinist bureaucracy has not extinguished the traditions of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union

The first public call in the Soviet Union for the rehabilitation of Trotsky, founder of the Fourth International, came last week from a delegate to next month's extraordinary party conference.

The anti-Stalinist historian Dr Yuri Afanasyev, director of the institute for State Archives, also called for the publication of Trotsky's writings so that everybody could study them.

'We must not stop the process of rehabilitation and judicial review at any level, or with any person. We have to rehabilitate all who were oppressed or wrongly accused and, as a matter of justice, Leon Trotsky stands equally with all the victims of Stalin,' Afanasyev told a Moscow press conference last week.

'On the question of Trotsky's rehabilitation, I think there will be a breakthrough in this direction. But it will depend on the deepening of perestroika in our historical sciences, and on the internal political struggle that is now under way in our party' he continued.

The prominent leaders of the 1917 revolution have all been rehabilitated - Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin. All except Trotsky who is still officially branded a criminal and enemy of the people.

'I believe the works of Trotsky and indeed of Stalin and Khrushchev should be published and made accessible to all, to teachers and students and citizens' Afanasyev said.

'It is very strange that professors and teachers try to criticise Trotsky when they have never read a word that he wrote' he went on.



These historical questions are the most decisive aspect of the crisis now running through every element in the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The week before Afanasyev's call, all history examinations in Soviet schools were cancelled on

working class.

'The laws of history are stronger than the bureaucracy.' How mighty are Trotsky's sentiments now proving to be!

Afanasyev was restored to the list of conference delegates at the final meeting of the Moscow city

party only after top-level intervention said to have been authorised by Gorbachev personally.

Despite the desperate efforts of the bureaucracy the rehabilitation of Stalin's victims could not fall short of Trotsky.

The Russian Revolution was led by the Bolshevik Party forged by Lenin and his political collaborators. That tradition of Bolshevism lives on in the consciousness of sections of the Soviet working class and the intelligentsia.

Only this explains the recent demonstration in Moscow which marched under slogans that included: 'Down with the Stalinist Revision of Marxism!'

ideas

Trotsky and his ideas are at the very heart of the crisis, engulfing Soviet society. It was Trotsky who led the fight against the abandonment of Marxist theory and practice that constituted the essence of the degeneration of the Russian revolution.

Stalin's theory of Socialism in One Country, pronounced in 1924 immediately following the death of Lenin, was a nationalistic repudiation of the internationalism which had inspired Bolshevism throughout its history.

Trotsky, basing himself on the Marxist theory of historical materialism, insisted that socialism could be built only on the highest material and spiritual achievements of capitalism and could therefore be organised only on a world scale.

The theory of socialism in one country was a reactionary utopia. The overthrow of capitalism in Russian in 1917 would be sustained only by the building of an international that would lead the working class to the overthrow of capitalism world-wide.

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Workers Press

Left, right and centre

That Neil Kinnock is finding his job as Labour leader a bit difficult just now is hardly a secret. After leading the party through its third successive General Election defeat, he has taken on the task of fitting it into what he imagines would be a more acceptable image for your average 'Guardian' reader.

Not surprisingly, this has led to friction with important sections of the Labour and trade union movement. Forced by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer into an election for the leadership, his aspirations to respectability have run into trouble.

The Transport and General Workers Union has given him a sharp slap on the wrist, and its General Secretary, Ron Todd, delivered him a severe ticking off.

None of these goings-on should be attributed to Kinnock's incompetence— incompetent though he is. They reflect the historical crisis of reformism, which in turn expresses the crisis of British imperialism itself. Indeed, only in such a period could a man like Kinnock come to be a labour leader.

But we must also be careful in assessing the character of Kinnock's opponents in the Labour party. In last week's Workers Press, John Rees' article referred to the organisers of the Chesterfield Conference as 'centrists'. This is a mistake.

Centrism was the term applied to those who broke from the Second International after its betrayal of working class internationalism in 1914, but who could not bring themselves to join the Third, Communist International. Their short-lived attempt in 1920 to form an international organisation of their own was derided as the 'Two-and-a-half' International.

In the 1930s, their political descendants were those who agreed with Trotsky that the Third International had been destroyed as a revolutionary organisation by Stalinism, but could not find their way to the Fourth. They were even more derisively referred to as the 'Three-and-a-quarter'.

Such political currents have two sides. On the one hand, they reflect the desire of layers of workers to break with opportunism. On the other, their leaders fight to wall them off from revolutionary conceptions and principles.

Consequently, they combine all kinds of cowardly tricks with the wildest of revolutionary-sounding phrases. There is no doubt that, as the crisis of the British state deepens, many such figures will take the stage.

But what has this to do with Benn and his friends? The 'Chesterfield process', as it has been called, has nothing in common with people like Andres Nin, Marceau Pivert, or even with the pre-war leaders of the Independent Labour Party.

The present critics of Kinnock remain firmly in the camp of reformism. They are firm believers in Parliament and upholders of peace. Even if they play with the vocabulary of Marxism, most of them are Christians. They aim to refurbish old-fashioned reformism when there is no prospect of a single reform worthy of the name.

So we ought not to confuse them with centrists. Otherwise we might mistake real centrists when they show up for revolutionaries.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

£10,000

by 30 September 1988

Another generous individual donation has given a boost to our Fighting Fund this week. This time it came from a local supporter.

Now that Workers Press is in circulation again, the political discussion amongst our readers as well as in the branches takes on a new lease of life.

With the latest developments in the Soviet Union and the first public call there for the political rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky, the fight we are conducting for

the rebuilding of the Fourth International becomes more crucial than ever.

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Death sentence for Viraj Mendis

by Stuart Carter

Viraj Mendis, who has been in sanctuary in a church in Manchester for the last 17 months, last week lost his appeal against the High Court's decision that he should be deported. The High Court ignored mounting evidence that Viraj would be facing imprisonment or death if returned to Sri Lanka.

Hundreds of Sinhalese have been assassinated for alleged sympathy with the Tamil people, including over 200 supporters of the ruling United National Party, killed since the peace-keeping accord was signed nine months ago.

Viraj is a Sinhalese who has been an outspoken supporter of the Tamil liberation movement. In just one day in January 1988 1154 Sinhalese were arrested by the Special Task Force under the

Prevention of Terrorism Act. Former detainees have been tortured by the Task force. Names of those arrested have not been revealed.

The High Court also refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords, but Viraj's lawyers say they will petition the Lords on his behalf.

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign is holding a national conference on 30 July 10 am at the Church of Ascension. The Campaign says 'Our conference will formulate the basis of an alliance necessary for the development of the sanctuary movement and the struggle against deportations.' It will discuss the new Immigration Bill, the situation in Sri Lanka and the treatment of refugees in Britain. Those wishing to attend phone 061 234 3168.

The Soviet Union: Trotskyism lives!

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It was this conception of Marxism that Stalinism repudiated. Under material and ideological pressures bearing down on an isolated revolution in a backward country, Stalin argued that it would be possible to establish socialism in Russia, independently of developments in world economy and politics.

Here was the ideological germ of developments which eventually produced a parasitic bureaucracy that started from the defence of its power and saw in the mobilisation of the strength of the international working class the greatest threat to the power it stole from the working class.

The concomitant of the theory of socialism in one country was the theory that the Soviet Union had to co-exist peacefully with imperialism, during which time 'socialism' would be built within the frontiers of the Soviet Union.

It was in the name of this peaceful co-existence that revolutionary movements were destroyed - from the Spanish revolution in the 1930s onwards - and millions of workers, communists and socialists slaughtered.

It is ironic that Gorbachev should be said to be behind the securing of Afanasyev's delegacy.

Ironic

Ironic and also a measure of the current turmoil and process of disintegration within the Stalinist bureaucracy.

For it was this same Gorbachev who at the celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the Russian revolution heaped praise on Stalin for having driven Trotskyism out of the international communist movement.

It was this same Gorbachev who at recent Hollywood-style summit with the leader of imperialism President Ronald Reagan, demonstrated to the world peaceful co-existence in action.

Every concession at the summit was made not by the imperialists but by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Star Wars was struck from the agenda but agreement was undoubtedly reached to sacrifice Angola as an indication of the good intentions of the Kremlin leaders towards the Botha regime in South Africa. This sacrifice follows hard on the heels of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and its impending return to the camp of imperialism.

Gorbachev and company remain Stalinists to their fingertips, leaders of a corrupt bureaucracy built by their political and ideological master, Stalin.

They have been forced to make concessions to the working class,

because of the great strength of their bitterest enemy, the Soviet working class. But the fragmentation of this once seemingly monolithic bureaucracy, its increasing lack of cohesion, is itself an expression of the growing political revolution, albeit an indirect one.

The establishment of socialism in the USSR requires the political overthrow of this crisis-torn Stalinist bureaucracy, an action on the part of the Soviet working class which is an integral part of the world socialist revolution.

It was Trotsky who led the fight for this programme. Stalinism set out to liquidate Trotskyism, ideologically, politically and physically. We say again: the call for the founder of the Fourth International's rehabilitation demonstrates that Stalinism has not succeeded.

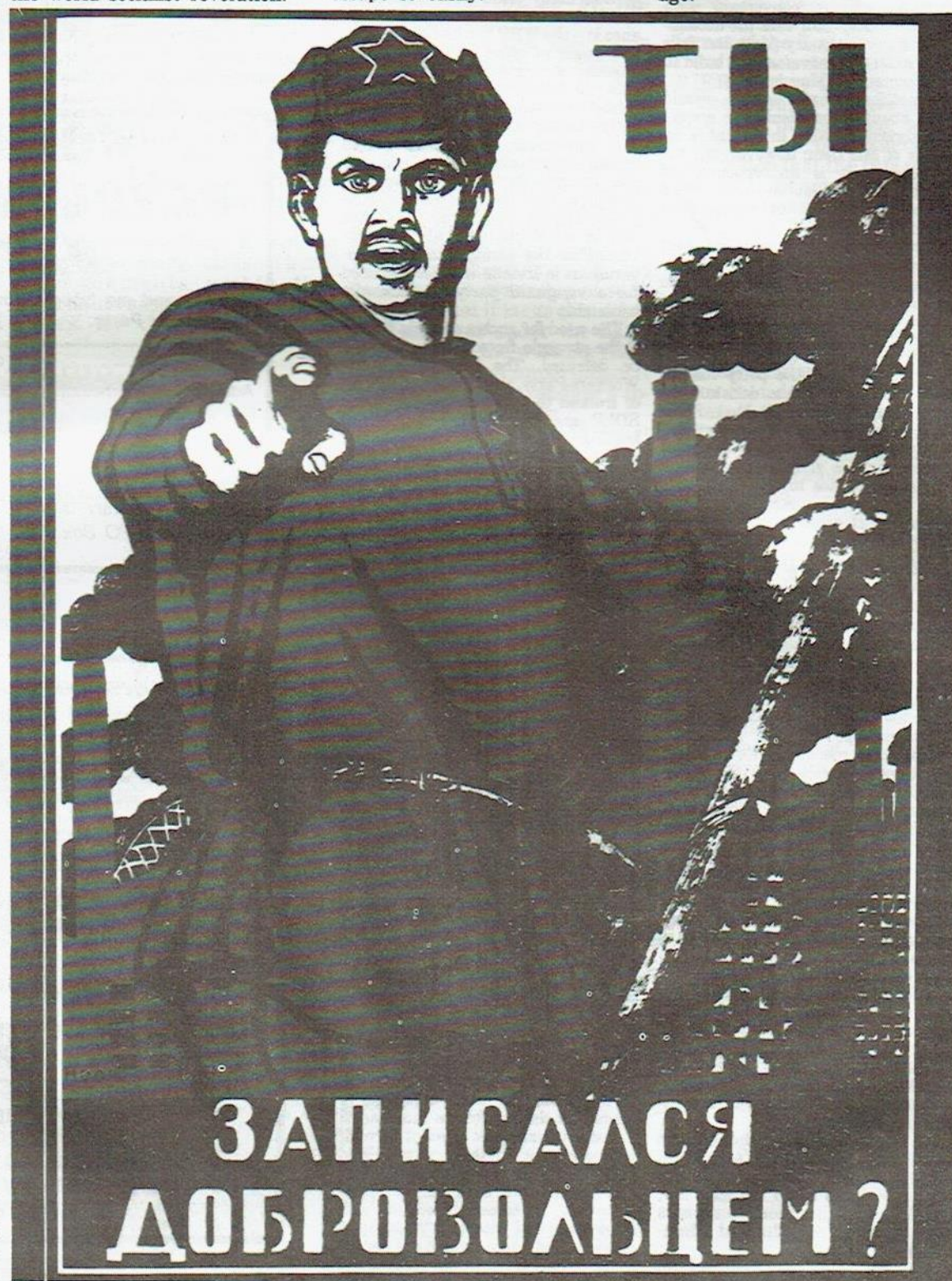
Such rehabilitation cannot be confined to clearing Trotsky's name of the lies and slanders levelled against him by Stalin and his fellow gangsters.

The bureaucracy will not escape so easily!

To rehabilitate Trotsky means to open a discussion of Trotsky's revolutionary ideas throughout the Soviet and international working class movement.

This discussion is already under way. It will not be stopped by the Stalinist bureaucracy, or by any other force.

It promises to be the mightiest step forward in the building of the Fourth International as the party of world socialist revolution since its foundation fifty years ago.



1918 poster calling on Russians to volunteer to fight against the White Generals and the Allied Interventionist armies who tried to crush the infant revolution.

LETTERS

Invaluable assistance

CHRIS BOYLAN evidently finds it very easy to say who is a Marxist and who is an 'opponent of Marxism' (letter 18 June).

He should perhaps pay attention to some more elementary questions first.

For example: shouldn't a Central Committee member of the Workers Revolutionary Party (like Chris) know the difference between trying to recruit someone to the party and attacking them publicly?

Another example: if everyone who is 'conversant with Marxist theory' and 'sees the necessity for a revolutionary party but fails (?) to enter the movement to build it' an opponent of Marxism?

Something Chris Boylan should think about: dogmatism is an enemy of Marxism; rushing into print is an enemy of Marxism; however, not every dogmatist is an 'opponent of Marxism' and not everyone who rushes into print is an 'opponent of Marxism'.

For example Chris Boylan is not an opponent of Marxism.

The answer to Kay Ainsworth who dismissed Peter Fryer's column as a waste of space is not to then damn Peter Fryer as something much worse, 'an opponent of Marxism', or to hand Peter Fryer the petty compliment that he provokes debate.

Just say 'what is' - that Peter Fryer, a comrade with a proud record of struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, is giving valuable and unique assistance to the WRP.

Andrew Burgin

Our perspective

Chris Boylan's letter in last week's Workers Press was really depressing.

Peter Fryer made his position sufficiently clear in the 24 January, 1986 edition of our paper, when he first began his weekly "Personal Column".

But perhaps CB has a shorter memory than me; otherwise he might give some recognition to PF's long association with our movement: how, for instance, he came to be driven out in 1959; and why, 27 years later, he accepted the invitation to write for us again.

Not at all small questions.

Chris might also do well to take into account the contribution Peter has made to socialist literature as a whole.

An essential feature of our perspective for world socialism includes the reconquest by the working class of all human culture.

I think Peter Fryer greatly assists us in that direction, whether he decides to become a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party or not.

I'd like to add that I thought the Cyril Ray "Guardian" article on socialism and wine was like a breath of fresh air. I thought, too, that Peter's subsequent comments were just as delightful and stimulating.

Jeff Jackson
South West London

A reply

WITH regard to the letter from the republican prisoner, I would first like to say that WRP members are not indifferent to the 'Irish question'. This issue has resulted in much discussion and active solidarity work for the past two-and-a-half years - something which was unheard of before 1985 under Healy.

The lack of response to Simon Pirani's article should not be seen as indifference, but rather a reflection of most members' ignorance and confusion regarding this all-important question for British socialists.

After many years of mis-leadership by Healy - whose legacy this ignorance is - the WRP has had two-and-a-half years of often fierce and bitter internal struggle. But we are now able to concentrate on this and other important issues.

Developing a Marxist perspective and analysing how the struggle against imperialism in Ireland and the struggle for a United Socialist Republic can be successfully concluded has only just begun. This work will be developed with all those involved in the struggle against imperialism in Ireland who see the need for a vanguard party and Marxist leadership.

The need for such a party is crucial if the struggle for socialism is not to be defeated. The Stalinists of the Workers Party, the Communist Party of Ireland the Labour Party and the SDLP are not in the business of leading a socialist revolution, while Gerry Adams MP, president of Sinn Fein, says that socialism is not on the agenda at present in the struggle against imperialism.

Ever since the 1920's revolution in China, Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class and every anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle (Spain, Germany, Greece and Chile to name but a few). Gorbachev's recent talks with Reagan were concerned with maintaining Stalinism's counter-revolutionary alliance with imperialism, betraying millions of oppressed peoples throughout the world, in Ireland, South Africa, El Salvador and elsewhere.

When Trotsky founded the Fourth International in 1938, he said that the crisis of humanity was the crisis of working class leadership. This is more true today than ever before and is particularly relevant to what is happening in Ireland.

The struggle against imperialism in Ireland will only be victorious if it is joined with the struggle for socialism now. I believe that Marxists in Ireland must renew Connolly's slogan: 'The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour, and the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland' and develop a programme in which the struggle of the working class is united with the struggle for national unity being waged by the republican movement.

Sectarianism does present formidable obstacles for those who seek to build unity between Catholic and Protestant workers in the six-counties. Protestant workers still have marginal interests: 'privileges' like jobs and houses which are denied to thousands of Catholics. This results in anti-Catholic ideology, aided and abetted by British imperialism and a bigoted loyalist state.

This sectarianism has been ignored, with only one or two exceptions, by the trade union bureaucracy in Ireland. It seems that their interests lie in maintaining the status-quo and, consequently, a religiously divided working class.

Similarly the British trade union and Labour Party leaders have consistently supported imperialism in its occupation and partition of Ireland. Like their counterparts in Ireland they are more interested in preserving their own interests than supporting Irish unity.

There can be no basis for working class unity in the North without an all-out struggle against sectarianism; those fighting for a vanguard party in Ireland must fight these bureaucrats on this crucial issue.

I agree with Simon that imperialism and loyalism are in crisis. However this crisis must go far deeper before it has any real impact on the thinking of protestant workers and on how they see their future interests in relation to British involvement in Ireland.

In this respect, the struggle being waged by the IRA against imperialism can only deepen this crisis further.

er. Through the Anglo-Irish agreement, now adhered to wholeheartedly by Haughey and his Fianna Fail government, the southern bourgeoisie is more than ever collaborating with British imperialism.

Imperialism does not rely solely on the orange card to maintain its power and control in Ireland. In fact loyalist hegemony in the North on its own is insufficient to imperialist needs. I would say that the southern bourgeoisie is the most crucial component to the future plans of British imperialism in Ireland.

Irish Marxists and socialists must point out all these developments to the working class and youth in both the North and South. Their only future under imperialism and capitalism is oppression, unemployment, emigration and poverty. The struggle for national unity is the struggle for socialism - this means a struggle to smash the orange state in the North and the green Tory state in the South.

This letter does not pretend to have the last word on these all-important questions for British socialists. But let the discussion begin.

Charlie Walsh
West London WRP

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Thursday 16 June, 7.30 pm.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN THE IMPERIALIST EPOCH.

Thursday 30 June, 7.30 pm.

THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION.

Thursday 7 July, 7.30 pm.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST STALINISM AND THE NECESSITY FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL.

Your questions answered

Workers Press invites readers to ask questions about the policy of the Workers Revolutionary Party, the history of the movement, or indeed about any other matter which is thought to be important. We begin with a question from a Kilburn reader.

I have seen you use the term 'political revolution' in connection with the Soviet Union. Can you tell me what you mean by this term?

The October revolution of 1917 overthrew capitalism and landlordism in Russia. The decisive areas of the economy—the land, means of industrial production, transport and means of exchange, together with foreign trading relations—were placed under the control of the state brought into being by the October revolution.

This is the basis of the structure of Soviet society and defines its character as a proletarian state.

But it is a proletarian state of a specific character. Under the impact of the isolation of the Soviet Union the revolution degenerated. A parasitic bureaucracy gradually emerged, separating itself

from a war-weary working class that had gone through the imperialist war, the revolution itself and the wars of intervention waged by the capitalist powers against the young soviet republic.

This bureaucracy usurped political power and on the basis of this power concentrated enormous material privileges into its own hands.

But this bureaucracy should not be confused with a class. Classes are defined by their relationship to the ownership or non-ownership of the means of production.

The bureaucracy is not a property-owning class. There are elements within the bureaucracy who certainly work for the restoration of

capitalist property. But these elements do not characterise the essence of the bureaucracy whose privileges derive from the political and ideological power it exercises. Its fate as a whole remains bound up with the nationalised property relations brought into being by 1917.

It is forced to defend this nationalised property but by means of its own, means which in the long run, unless Stalinism is defeated in the working class movement, will lead to the overthrow of the Soviet Union by the forces of imperialism.

Whether we call the ruling group in the USSR a class or a parasitic bureaucracy is not a matter of abstract terminology. To invest the bureaucracy with the status of a class is to attribute powers to it which it simply does not have. A class is bound together by its property: it is this that gives it its political cohesion. It is precisely because the bureaucracy is not based on the ownership of such property that it lacks this cohesion and that under the hammer blows of the working class and the threat of imperialism it is showing every tendency towards fragmentation.

Those who see in the Stalinist bureaucracy a new class are forced in practice to renounce the defence of 1917, forced to join with all those anti-communist forces who work for the overthrow of the planned economy of the USSR and its re-absorption into the imperialist world market.

Such are the politics of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in this country who designate the Soviet Union as 'state capitalist', a favoured term because nobody knows precisely what it means.

Although appearing to many as arch opponents of the 'Russian regime' their 'theory' in fact involves a capitulation to the Stalinist bureaucracy,

ideologically and politically.

For Marxism, classes do not arise in history by accident. They express the inner needs of the productive forces. If the ruling elite in the Soviet Union is a new class it must have arisen out of historical necessity and therefore have been historically progressive - just as the bourgeoisie was a historically necessary and progressive class at the time of its emergence in struggle against feudalism.

In fact the opposite is true. The bureaucracy, far from being an instrument for the development of the productive forces of the Soviet Union, was, from the outset a positive BARRIER to that development.

The Fourth International long ago broke from all the adherents of the reactionary conception that the 1917 revolution brought into being a new form of class rule.

We stand for the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union and at the same time for the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy by the working class.

Our defence is a defence of the nationalised property relations that determine the character of the Soviet state. This defence is unconditional because it relies not a whit on what the bureaucracy does or does not do.

We at the same time lead the fight for the political revolution in the Soviet Union, as well as eastern Europe and China. The task of the working class of these countries is not to make a social revolution which will replace one form of class rule with another - this remains the task of the working class in the capitalist countries.

No the task of the working class of the Soviet Union is to make a political revolution that will restore political power to that class, the working class, whose revolution of 1917 created the Soviet state.



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Justice will be done

THIRTY years ago this month, in an unsigned editorial in 'Labour Review', I wrote these words:

'The world labour movement is horrified by the brutal murder of Imre Nagy, Pal Maleter, Miklos Gimes and Jozsef Szilagyi. There is not one redeeming aspect of this sordid and shameful affair. First Nagy is tricked into Russian custody by means of a specious promise of safe conduct, and Maleter arrested while he is negotiating with the Soviet Command. For months public opinion is lulled by Kadar and his spokesmen into supposing that Nagy's life is not in danger. Then come trial, sentence and execution, secret and sudden, so that the news hits like a physical blow. The crime is accomplished and the criminals are washing the blood off their hands before anyone has been given the opportunity to protest or appeal for clemency.

'Nagy and his companions are killed, but Rakosi and his friends go scot-free, guzzling in some Black Sea villa while the suffering and sorrow they brought to Hungary go on without respite. Not a hair of Farkas's head is touched—Farkas the loathsome torturer who castrated his victims and urinated in their faces. But Nagy the communist is killed; Maleter, the heroic leader of a desperate guerilla band, who proudly

wore to the end his red five-pointed star, who answered by clapping his hand to his pistol holster when Basil Davidson asked him what his attitude would be if there was any attempt to restore capitalism—Maleter is killed; Gimes, who loved the truth above all else, whose pen dripped acid when he wrote about the torturers and hangmen who had disgraced the name of communism—Gimes is killed.

'None of these men was great in himself. But they were buoyed up and swept forward on the tide of great events; and they did not sully the Hungarian revolution by temporising with their tormentors, or by confessing to crimes they had not committed. They were steadfast to the end. They will not soon be forgotten.'

And 30 years later, and not least in Hungary itself, these victims of Stalinism have assuredly not been forgotten.

Last week the Hungarian Committee for Historical Justice held a ceremony, attended by 300 people, at plot 301 of Budapest's Rakoskercz-ter cemetery, where the bodies of Nagy, Maleter, Gimes, Szilagyi, and 321 others, murdered by the Kadar government for their part in the 1956 revolution, lie in unmarked graves over which the brambles grow as thick as Stalinist lies.

Many of those who attended this ceremony were relatives of the victims, or had been imprisoned after the uprising was crushed by the Soviet bureaucracy.

The gathering called for the full rehabilitation of the slain and for an explanation of the role played in their judicial murder by Janos Kadar, who clung to power until only a few weeks ago.

After the ceremony there was a peaceful demonstration through the streets of Budapest. It was broken up by motorcycle police armed with truncheons, who arrested five or more of the demonstrators and chased others.

There are rumours circulating in Budapest that an 'at least partial' rehabilitation of Nagy and his companions is coming within two months.

punishment

The pressure for a full rehabilitation, and a full explanation, and the punishment of those responsible, is not going to go away. On the contrary it will build up steadily.

This summer for instance, there is due to be published in Budapest—whether openly or clandestinely I don't know, and I don't think it matters—a memoir of Miklos Gimes, compiled by his companion Aliz Halda.

This will tell the younger Hungarian workers and students, born since the 1956 events, something about the life of this outstanding journalist and dissident, whose only crime was to think for himself and insist on telling others what he thought.

Readers of my little book 'Hungarian Tragedy' will recall that I met Gimes during a visit to Hungary in August 1956, a few weeks before the uprising began, and that he denounced the disgraced Stalinist bosses Rakosi and Farkas as murderers, demanded that they be publicly put on trial, and forecast disaster if this act of justice were not carried out.

Two years later Gimes himself was murdered. They thought they had silenced him for ever. But from plot 301 his bones, and those of his companions, cry out insistently for justice.

AS I SEE IT...



BY TOM OWEN

Human dust

IT is commonplace for radical sociologists and bar room sages that 'all the world's a stage' and that we are like 'a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more'.

God, history or society write the scripts, apportion a role in the grand theatrical production; we learn the lines and exit stage right if we are virtuous and stage left if we are of the Devil's party.

One of the problems with such all-encompassing metaphors derived from 'theatre' or game playing is that while we all may be actors or gamblers, things can well be in deadly earnest. For some games can be dangerous and some drama is tragic.

If you have had the opportunity to venture into cultures and climates that make for a much more public life than ours — like those of southern Europe for example — you will know

that the streets are visibly alive with public performances.

Vendors, beggars, musicians, tarot card readers, fire-eaters, prostitutes all sell themselves through dramatic performances of one kind or another; the lonely tenor singing an aria accompanied only by a crackling tape recorder outside a Barcelona Cathedral; an outlandish ostrich-feathered Brazilian, hovering like a ragged bird of paradise over his beer can collecting tin; the tragic girls of the Barrio Chino selling their sex as objects of fantasy, flesh and tinsel — all appear as a caricature of popular drama.

The tragic and phenomenal aspects of this social performance have long fascinated modern urban artists and poets. The Cubists of France and Spain, the Futurists of Russia and Italy were all bewitched by the ebb and flow of city life. Picasso's bull fighters and prostitutes, Larionov's soldiers and trapeze artists have one important thing in common — the risk they take with danger, disease, death and violence.

As sure as their forms are captured in paint, their destiny is caught in the frame capitalism has put them in. Apart from exceptional individuals, or in revolutionary circumstances, the melodrama repeats itself. In 1937, for example, the women of the Barrio Chino were liberated briefly. Armed militias of workers cleared out the brothels and shot the pimps. The women enlisted in revolutionary organisations, and along with wider and wider layers of oppressed people divested themselves of the trappings of oppression and exploitation.

Advanced capitalism has created another type of gamester or performer — this time in the mass media. And this kind of drama also carries its own risks.

There are whole areas of public broadcasting where the 'performers' and 'personalities' can take advantage of the separation of public and private life and step in and out of their frames.

They are given a role to elaborate, a set of discrete values to express and reinforce, a certain physical image etc. It is best if their 'private life' is like that of Caesar's wife — or at least very discreet. For the media that nurtures and sustains them will delight in their downfall, pursue them for every viewing second or column inch.

Take the recent case of Mr. Frank Bough. His Home Counties blandness, his obvious concern for middle class decency made him an exemplary Thatcherite Mr. Clean. He introduces healthy sporting pursuits, charity runs, family current affairs. He goes on holiday with his equally bland wife to represent the consumer interests of other Boughs fearful of being ripped off by devious Spaniards or Italians or even more exotic foreigners.

Then our self-appointed guardians of the public morality claim they are awash with affidavits indicating that our Mr B has been snorting cocaine at sex parties. He makes a desperate attempt to wriggle out of the frame of scandal into that of respectability by returning to the bosom of his family in Berkshire.

Twenty years ago such family entertainers could be said to be 'tired and tearful'. Now they can scarcely be presented as 'laughing their heads off and hyper-active'.

As public figures people in Bough's position are doomed unless, like that great liar Profumo, they do penance through charitable works, or have powerful friends cynical enough to hope that the public has short memories.

But the boys and girls who are used at the sex and drugs parties are like the performers on the Ramblas or in the Barrio Chino. They are trapped in dangerous and destructive roles until the proletarian revolution draws them into its sweep. If not they can become what Trotsky calls that 'human dust', following the histrionic demagoguery of Fascist reaction.

Whither the South African revolution?

IT IS this question that every Trotskyist fighter has to face up to and answer. We must answer it not passively, but as revolutionary internationalists who grasp that what we do now could determine the fate not only of the South African revolution but also the world socialist revolution.

Contained in four recent events - a mass strike, a new state of emergency, the counter-revolutionary deal cooked up between Reagan and Gorbachev at the summit, and the Mandela concert - are the elements that augur what is to come. The present impasse cannot drag on forever, for like nature the class struggle too abhors a vacuum.

Three million black South African workers responded to the Confederation of South African Trade Unions' (COSATU's) recent call for a three day stay-away. No better proof has been provided that the black proletariat heart of the South African revolution still beats strongly. The only force that has a vested interest in destroying apartheid, root and branch, continues to show its resilience.

The strike was the biggest in South African history. Class conscious workers demonstrated their absolute rejection of the new, Thatcherite Labour Relations Amendment Bill and the recently imposed political restrictions on COSATU and 17 other organisations. But equally important, the three days strike demonstrated once more that the 'liberal' wing of the South African bourgeoisie is not at all a potential ally ('business patriots', as Winnie Mandela called them) but thoroughly counter-revolutionary. It proves, despite the tortuous and pathetic efforts of the present petty-bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist leadership to persuade it otherwise, that the black proletariat can and must rely only on its own strength to gain victory.

The imposition of a third state of emergency reflects the impasse that the Botha regime is in. This new Bonapartist measure follows hard on the heels of fresh threats on the media, new curbs on the universities, the mass call-up of army reser-

vists to fight the war in Angola, and many other symptoms of right wing reaction.

There has been a distinct downturn in open mass political action in recent months. But the forces of revolution are by no means spent. In recent weeks, in the face of the most brutal repression, they have been represented by three million black strikers, the continuous rash of strikes throughout the country, the fearless battles of workers and youth against the state-backed Inkatha thugs, the 30,000 boycotting students in Namibia, the 70,000 Western Cape school boycotters and the Soweto students who threaten a new wave of boycotts.

Nor has there been a decline in the ferocity of the forces of bourgeois reaction, represented by the South African bourgeoisie, the racist state and the fascist parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organisations.

These two camps continue to range up against each other in preparation for another round of fierce and open class battle.

At the recent summit talks in Moscow, seemingly removed from the centre-stage of the South African revolution, Reagan and Gorbachov have conspired to set the scene for future developments in Southern Africa. Their primary aim is to prevent the class struggle from being fought through to the end, and, instead, to promote some kind of 'negotiated settlement'.

In the last two years the Stalinist bureaucracy has paved the way for this line through the published advice of its Southern African experts. These have strongly argued that enthusiasm for socialism in South Africa should be curbed and that America and Russia should spearhead a compromise settlement involving guarantees to private property. Prospective American president George Dukakis has not been slow to announce his backing also for 'internationally-sponsored, all-party negotiations for the abolition of apartheid'.

Both imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy fear nothing more than proletarian re-

volution in South Africa. For the establishment of black workers' soviet power in South Africa would only be the first episode in a permanent revolution that would sweep rapidly across Southern Africa and provide mighty impulses to the world socialist revolution in the capitalist countries and the political revolutions against the Stalinist bureaucracies in the degenerate and deformed workers' states.

It is furthermore no accident, rather it is part of a single counter-revolutionary strategy, that the South African Communist Party (SACP), the arch-ally of the Soviet bureaucracy, has been in the forefront of an attack on the layers of vanguard workers and youth who have grasped the bankruptcy of the 'two-stage' conception. The SACP has been taking the 'advice' of the Soviet bureaucracy for decades, and, exploiting its close ties with the ANC, has been foisting it on to the black workers and youth of South Africa. Witness the vicious and systematic attack on the 'socialists', 'ultra-leftists' and 'Trotskyists' in the unions and youth organisations in recent months.

The Free Mandela concert and marches reflect the new stage in the development of the revolutionary crisis and the unfolding of the counter-revolutionary strategy in South and Southern Africa.

Whereas we support the release of Mandela and all political prisoners we oppose the non-proletarian and anti-Marxist method of struggle. The method of struggle coincides entirely with the anti-revolutionary, reformist perspective of the African National Congress (ANC), the SACP, the Soviet bureaucracy and indeed imperialism. The petty bourgeois method of playing on bourgeois public opinion, in this case relying on a coterie of pop stars and the medium of television, emphasising the 'immorality' of apartheid, has been deployed as a consistent international strategy.

Only a few months ago the Free Moses Mayekiso campaign was disowned by the ANC and SACTU under the

pretext that they do not support campaigns for the release of individual detainees or prisoners. Over the weekend this pretext was exposed before 80 million viewers as a gigantic ideologically motivated fraud.

In their practice the ANC and SACTU have confirmed that the real political dividing line is clearly between those class conscious fighters, like Moses Mayekiso, that accept the necessity for permanent revolution in South Africa and those petty bourgeois nationalists, Stalinists and reformists, who wish to prevent the black proletariat from realising its own interests by smashing apartheid and capitalism.

These events sound a clear warning to Trotskyists worldwide. Now is the time to concentrate your political energies and rally in support of the embryonic Trotskyist vanguard in South Africa.

Lenin and Trotsky's writings are punctuated with references to the vital, indispensable role of the vanguard party at such times of revolutionary crisis. The situation in South Africa offers a short breathing space in which 'the lever of a small group' (Trotsky) will have to work revolutionary 'miracles'.

Only Trotskyism, the revolutionary Marxism of today, stands between victory for the proletarian revolution, on the one hand, or defeat at the hands of fascist reaction or Stalinist betrayal, on the other.

As Trotsky said in 1931 in analogous circumstances, referring to the situation in Spain: 'There is and there can be no greater crime than to waste time'.

● NO TO AN IMPERIALIST AND STALINIST INSPIRED NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT!!

● NO TO AN AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS GOVERNMENT!!

● YES TO A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!!

● YES TO A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT!!

Lights out for Hammond

IAN OFFENSIVE must be launched within the unions against the leaders of the electricians' union EEPTU; their expulsion from the TUC must be fought for by every serious socialist and trade unionist.

Everyone knows that EEPTU leader Eric Hammond and his cronies are walking out of the TUC anyway, as part of their drive for 'company unionism' which will get 'franchises' from multi-nationals to control their workforces with single-union no-strike deals, and legally-binding wage-cutting contracts.

Thatcher and the ruling class hope that Hammond's union can be used to weaken the workers' movement, and together with the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers, become the centre of a new right-wing federation which will organise in all industries. (Hammond already has thousands of clerical workers on the books, for example, and the UDM has just snatched several hundred members of MSF).

There are no fundamental differences between Hammond and the right-wing leaders of the TUC. Neither side are

by Simon Pirani

opposed to the principle of no-strike or single-union deals; it is just that the EEPTU favours more open collaboration with the state and employers, and is prepared to snatch members from other unions - which other bureaucrats cannot condone.

The AEU leaders, for example, want the same type of union as Hammond, as they showed over the Ford Dundee deal. But they cannot get away with following him out of the TUC yet, because of the reaction this would provoke from their members.

What, then, is the point of a campaign for Hammond's expulsion? It will sharpen the fight against class-collaborationist politics throughout the unions, and weaken the bureaucracy as a whole; it will raise the issue of workers' democracy which is non-existent in the EETPU, and is fast disappearing in the AEU.

It will focus on the need for leadership that will fight consistently for the independence of the unions from the state, against scabbing and class collaboration - that is, revolutionary leadership.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock has played his part, declaring he will maintain contact with Hammond whatever happens. We demand that 'lefts' like Tony Benn and Eric Heffer lead a campaign for the Labour Party to break all such contact. (Workers Press 11 June 1988 said that the 'lefts' and Stalinists are looking for some way to patch things up, but in fact, many in both wings of the bureaucracy have decided that is impossible: Benn has demanded the EEPTU's expulsion - as has that incorrigible right-winger, John Edmunds of GMBATU. What they have not done is to fight to mobilise on the issue).

What about the EEPTU's principled trades unionists? It is not just a question of welcoming them into membership of TUC-affiliated unions. What

is important is that, in laying the foundations of an anti-Hammond electricians' union, or electricians' sections in other unions, a fight against ALL bureaucracy and class-collaboration can be waged.

An essential element in this struggle is a vote against Hammond in the forthcoming EEPTU ballot: he wants a mandate for leaving the TUC and he must be rejected. This is the first job.

This Saturday, 25 June, the 'Flashlight' EEPTU left-wingers meet in an open conference in Manchester. Within 'Flashlight' the Euro-communists, pseudo-Trotskyists of the 'Militant' tendency, and others, are calling for TUC 'unity' - which is actually non-existent! The Euro-communists and 'Militant' tendency, are saying there should be no split; they advocate staying in the EEPTU even if Hammond leaves the TUC. In reality, there IS a split - and it must be deepened. **Wage an anti-Hammond offensive!**

Irish News Irish News Irish News Irish News

ON WEDNESDAY of last week at Portlaoise district court Patrick McVeigh was released from custody because there was no-one in court from Scotland Yard to identify him as the man named in the warrants alleging his involvement with an IRA bombing campaign in London in 1981.

McVeigh, who served a prison sentence in Portlaoise prison, was re-arrested on his release last month while still inside the prison compound by Irish police acting on the warrants issued by Scotland Yard.

Thatcher and the Tories went into a frenzy because of last week's decision; but they need not have worried: Irish Justice Minister Gerry Collins said that the decision would be challenged and tested by the state in the High Court. After a meeting in Belfast last Friday of the Anglo-Irish conference, Collins told reporters that extradition cases would proceed through the courts despite the outcome of the recent McVeigh case.

Mr Tom King, Secretary of State for the occupied six counties, speaking after the talks with Collins and other representatives of the Irish government said that he was absolutely satisfied that the Irish government was committed to achieving effective extradition. This gives the lie to the pretence and illusions being peddled in certain political circles, including

some on the left, that the Irish government might have second thoughts about implementing extradition.

This was especially expressed in the aftermath of Britain's refusal to release the Birmingham Six or to prosecute the RUC officers involved in the shoot-to-kill conspiracy.

It shows how politically naive such people are in thinking that the southern bourgeoisie, and particularly the Fianna Fail wing of the bourgeoisie have collaborated with and facilitated in every possible way British imperialist interests in both parts of Ireland. Despite everything that has happened in the occupied six counties in the last 20 years, as well as to Irish citizens in Britain over the past number of years, this will continue.

Patrick McVeigh, Robert Russell, Dermot Finucane and all the others wanted by the police in the British-occupied six counties and in Britain itself for alleged political offences, cannot expect anything else from Haughey's government. This is the only meaning of the so-called Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Last Wednesday evening in Lisburn, HQ of the British army in Ireland, six British soldiers of the Royal Signals regiment were killed

by Charlie Walsh

in their booby-trapped van while leaving the town on their way back to base in Derry city.

The bomb which was attached underneath the van was claimed by the IRA.

GARETH PIERCE, solicitor for a number of the Birmingham Six, speaking at the recent conference of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in Galway in the west of Ireland, said that there should be no extradition from the Republic until the rights of Irish prisoners in Britain are corrected. She believed that Irish inmates were not safe in British jails and said that the Birmingham Six was a set-up. "If I were the Dublin government, I would want Irish prisoners in Britain to get the same treatment as British ones," she said.

She called for the quashing of the convictions of the Birmingham Six and for the international criticism of Britain's handling of the case to continue.

Patrick McLaughlin and Liam McCotter, both from Belfast, were

given 20 and 17 years' respectively at the Old Bailey on Monday for allegedly conspiring to carry out a campaign of bombings and assassinations of senior Tory politicians in the run-up to last year's general election in Britain.

In the light of all previous results where Irish people have been tried for political offences in Britain, it was not exactly a surprise that Pat McLaughlin and Liam McCotter should be found guilty. With all the press hysteria and its anti-Irish bias it would be next to impossible for either of the men to get a fair trial. Two more names have been added to the long list of Irish POWs in English and Irish jails.

The only criminals are the Thatcher and the Tory government, and the Labour and trade union leaders who support her in continuing the policy of occupying and partitioning Ireland.

As long as this goes on the resistance struggle against occupation will continue. British socialists have a responsibility - not just to support the struggle against imperialism in Ireland but also to assist in every way the POWs incarcerated in the hell-holes of English jails. We must demand that they are given the right to serve their sentences in a prison near to their families and loved ones in Ireland.