

The Russian Revolution lives on

'The Social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses.'

Leon Trotsky, 'Revolution Betrayed.'

WORKERS shot down by the score, in a demonstration following a walk-out of 14,000 workers from a plant where wages had been cut by 30-35 per cent, while food prices were rising. Their boss had sparked the walk-out by telling them: 'If you can't afford meat, eat sausage rolls.'

This happened not in Britain, the United States, or any other capitalist country, but in the Soviet Union, in the Ukraine town of Novocherkassk, in 1962. It happened not in the notorious Stalin period, but when Khrushchev was in office.

The story does not come from some right-wing agency which could be condemned as anti-Soviet, but was confirmed in the 22 June issue of *Komsomolets*, organ of the Young Communist League in the Rostov region.

The *Komsomolets* account was provoked by the unofficial circulation of a 30-page document on the 1962 events by a survivor, Pyotr Siuda. He was arrested at the time and served six years in prison. Seven workers were given the death penalty.

Pyotr Siuda's own father had been a well-known Bolshevik and had perished in prison in 1939, one of the countless victims of Stalin's frame-up trials and purges.

Siuda records that at one point in what began as a spontaneous demonstration:

'Thousands of workers from his plant marched into town, carrying red flags and portraits of Lenin. On the bridge over the railway and the river Tuzlov they found two columns of tanks and armed troops. They filed past, shouting, "Make way for



A Red Guard patrol of workers on the streets of Petrograd, 1917

the working class."

And so these tragic events are at the same time profoundly inspiring. *Workers Press* has emphasised throughout the recent developments in the USSR that Trotskyism lives on in the Fourth International and also in the struggles of the Soviet working class.

The battle of Novocherkassk is a highly significant but only tiny part of the truth about the long-maturing political revolution of the Soviet working class to overthrow the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy. Following Khrushchev's 1956 'revelations' about the tyranny of Stalin, these

events showed the real face of the bureaucracy, just as did the tanks in Budapest in 1956.

The battle of Pyotr Siuda and his comrades for the truth inspires not only the Soviet working class in its struggles today but also the working class of every country. There is a deeply objective reason for this.

The social revolution which is necessary in the capitalist countries and the political revolution in the USSR are integral parts of the same world proletarian revolution. In the capitalist countries we need above all to reconstruct the Fourth International as the

Bolshevik leadership which can put an end to Stalinist betrayals. The Soviet workers' struggle and the continuity of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union are the greatest inspiration for this in the achievement of this task.

But the same necessity confronts the Soviet workers. The greatest contribution to their struggle is to begin to overcome their isolation, with the Fourth International in reconstruction coming forward as the advanced leadership in the advanced capitalist countries. The theoretical and political heritage of Trotsky's struggle for the continuity of Bolshevism is the basic requirement of these united struggles. That is what is fought for by the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference for Reconstruction of the Fourth International.

It was Trotsky who, in his book 'The Revolution Betrayed', provided the Marxist analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its 'socialism in a single country'. At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party on July 3, we drew upon this analysis in the following way in discussing the Special Conference of the Soviet Communist Party:

A direct exchange took place at that Conference between Yeltsin (who had been removed from his post as Moscow Secretary after outspoken criticism of bureaucratic privileges and resistance to 'glasnost' by some older Stalinists) and Ligachev (said to represent the more conservative element on the Politburo). Ligachev's response to Yeltsin

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Workers Press

Beware Stalinism

NELSON Mandela's rejection of the Botha government's cynical offer of a six hour visit from his family on his seventieth birthday will be supported by every opponent of apartheid throughout the world.

Mandela's action - after 24 years in prison - exemplifies the courage of hundreds of thousands of black workers and students who have fought with enormous tenacity against a brutal regime.

But heroism alone will not lead to the overthrow of Botha nor to the establishment of socialism in southern Africa.

Dangerous forces are working consciously to strangle the revolutionary movement of the South African working class. Chief amongst these is the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow headed by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Last week three days of secret talks were held between representatives of the United States, South Africa, Cuba and Angola. The Cuban spoke not just for Fidel Castro but for Gorbachev.

The talks reached agreement in principle to withdraw 50,000 Cuban troops from Angola. This withdrawal would mean the return of Angola directly to imperialist control.

In return for this act of treachery, Botha has made a worthless promise to accept a United Nations resolution to grant 'independence' to Namibia.

It is this same Stalinist bureaucracy that is behind the programme of the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress: that first the apartheid regime must be got rid of and only then will it be possible to raise the question of socialism in South Africa.

This programme means the subordination of the interests of the working class to those of a so-called 'progressive' element in the capitalist class. It is in the name of this 'two-stage' theory that the interests of the Angolan working class and peasantry are to be sacrificed to imperialism.

This same policy has seen representatives of the Oppenheimer empire wined and dined in Moscow and visits of South African academics organised to Russia.

Gorbachev is as prepared to do deals with Botha, as was Stalin with Hitler in 1939 when the Soviet-German Treaty of Friendship was signed.

In South Africa itself the ANC and the South African Communist Party have begun a systematic campaign, including intimidation and physical violence, against members and leaders of the catering union because they have refused to accept either the ANC's Freedom Charter or the Azanian manifesto. Instead they have urged the union to work towards a socialist programme. Because they have rejected the Freedom Charter - which doesn't mention socialism but guarantees 'progressive' firms such as Anglo-American the right to continue to exploit the black working class - the Stalinists inside the Confederation of South African Trade Unions have split the catering workers' union and recognised a rump union.

This is the treachery of Stalinism and 'peaceful coexistence' at work! The urgent need is to build an alternative leadership in South Africa in struggle against Stalinism. The deep political and social crisis in the Soviet Union now makes this entirely possible - and above all urgently necessary.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £3738.76

THIS week's Workers Press is dominated by developments in the Soviet Union and their international implications. The remarkable events of 1962 show that the great changes now taking place in the land of the 1917 Revolution have been building up over a long period of time.

The events in Novocherkassk can only be one example amongst thousands. Literally millions of workers in the Soviet Union must know of some friend, relation or acquaintance who was put to death by Stalin or his successors. It is difficult to grasp the political turmoil that the exposure of events such as those in 1962 are creating throughout Russia and amongst the Communist Parties of the world.

These stirring events are matters of great interest and excitement for every Trotskyist. As we have said we now have great responsibilities and ones we must not shirk. We have plans to bring our readers first hand material from the Soviet Union as well as to make Trotsky's works as widely available to the Russian working class.

The task of building our movement in Britain and internationally is the responsibility of every member and supporter. Please give as generously as you can to our Fund. But above all please take the paper to the widest layers possible; discuss these momentous events in the Soviet Union and appeal to them for their political and financial support in the work we are doing. The £10,000 Fund is growing too slowly. Please step up the tempo.

Geoff Pilling

All donations to: WRP PO Box 735 London SW9 7QS.

EETPU - Boss's union

THE DECISION of the electricians' union EETPU to break with the TUC marks a new stage in the crisis facing the trade union movement in this country.

The decision was carried by a minority of the union's members as the result of a mis-leading ballot. But it gives the leaders the power to sign whatever single union, no-strike deals with the employers that they wish.

What are electricians and trade unionists generally to do about this decision?

In last week's Workers Press, Bernard Franks argued that it was wrong for electricians to leave the union in order to remain with the TUC, and quoted Trotsky on the need to fight in unions even when controlled by fascists.

On one point Bernard is undoubtedly correct. We are not opposed, as a matter of principle, to working in workers' organisations, including the unions, no matter how corrupt their leadership. If there was a factory organised by the EETPU it might well be necessary to enter it and fight against the policies of the leadership. And where there was no alternative to state-controlled fascist unions it would be necessary for Trotskyists to work in such unions.

However, this is not the situation in Britain today. A separate union for electricians has been announced. A membership battle will now break out between Hammond's union and the new union. Where do we stand? We can only support those who have decided to form a new union.

One thing is clear. The issue is not one facing electricians alone. Eric Hammond merely shows the way for the trade union leaders as a whole, many of whom, while calling for action against the electricians, have in fact supported the path he has taken. He is simply half a step ahead of them.

Already leaders of the engineering union, AEU, are in merger negotiations with the EETPU. And AEU leaders such as Communist Party of Great Britain leader Jimmie Airlie, have negotiated similar deals to those that will form the basis of the EETPU's activities.

This trend can only be reversed if it is understood that it is not a question of returning the union such as the EETPU back to a

... a matter of forming such a ...

Credit crisis looms

LAST WEEK'S rise in interest rates - the sixth since the beginning of June - was rejected by the City as inadequate to deal with the mounting rate of inflation. Next week's June trade figures are being anxiously awaited as a factor that could precipitate a further steep rise. Even so, the rise will come as a serious blow to those thousands of small businesses who have managed to survive over the last period only because of the availability of credit.

Thatcher's now threatened boom has been concentrated amongst small firms in the non-manufacturing sector of the economy. While this sector, together with the City has mushroomed, manufacturing industry has continued its chronic decline. Last week, as Lawson announced his interest rate changes, Rover said it is to close two of its factories, including the Cowley South plant where the Montego and the Maestro ranges are made.

Nearly 5,000 jobs will be axed.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson last week admitted that the increase will force up

mortgage rates and Building Society chiefs confirmed that increases of two per cent can be expected. The Halifax building society said its rates would rise from 1 August - possibly to 12 per cent. The likely mortgage rate increase will add around £50 a month to a £50,000 loan, with an 11 per cent rate adding £66 a month.

The conflict between Lawson and Prime Minister Thatcher reached a new stage last week with the anticipated return from across the Atlantic of arch-monetarist Sir Alan Walters as economic advisor to Downing Street. The dispute appears to centre on whether Britain should join the European Monetary System which would in practice tie sterling to the German mark.

This is Lawson's plan, supported by the Treasury.

Walters argues that if exchange rates are fixed between Germany and Britain while Britain has a higher inflation rate, this will mean a large inflow of funds from Germany - attracted by the higher interest rates introduced to curb the rate of inflation.

Instead of interest rate policy

Walters wants a return to severe restrictions on the money supply that characterised the early years of the Thatcher government after 1979. The immediate cause of the higher interest rates is not so much the result of the Lawson-Walters conflict but the increasing exchange rate of the dollar.

Last month's US trade figures were not as bad as had been feared and the dollar rose on their release. British capital is thus faced with a number of mounting contradictions which arise from the crisis of world capitalism. If the Americans take severe action to reverse their trade deficit - as seems likely after the November presidential election - the dollar will surge ahead and further weaken sterling.

At the same time, action to curb the US trade deficit is bound to involve a sharp clampdown on imports with resultant heavy losses for European and Japanese firms. But if the Americans leave their deficit unchecked this will make worse the instability in the world financial system. Walters has returned to Downing Street at an appropriate moment.

The Russian Revolution lives on

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in the Conference is extremely revealing: 'I don't want to boast, but when I ran (sic) the city of Tomsk, we were self-reliant in food and in our vegetables. But when you ran your city, Boris ... you kept Sverdlovsk on ration books for nine whole years.'

This is how the Stalinist bureaucrats respond when, under criticism, they feel the necessity of looking for some response from the people! There is no question of a programme, of the self-mobilisation of the masses, no reference to the nature of socialism or anything of that sort. Only a Mafia-like claim about how those who 'run the town' can feed the silent masses.

Could there be a more striking confirmation of Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy?

'The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there are little goods the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. 'When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting-point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It

'knows' who is to get something and who is to wait'. (The Revolution Betrayed, page 112)

It was this bureaucracy which provided the social base for Stalin's faction in the Bolshevik Party. The political betrayals perpetrated by that faction as leadership of the Communist International, culminating in the coming to power of Hitler in 1933 and then the sacrifice of the Spanish revolution on the altar of 'democracy', sealed the isolation of the USSR. In these conditions the bureaucracy was consolidated as a counter-revolutionary force:

'The social meaning of the Soviet Thermidor now begins to take shape before us. The poverty and cultural backwardness of the masses has again become incarnate in the malignant figure of the ruler with a great club in his hand. The deposed and abused bureaucracy (i.e. pre-1917), from being a servant of society, has again become its lord.' (Revolution Betrayed, page 113.)

So it was in 1936, and the butchers of Novocherkassk in 1962 are instantly recognisable! But now, in 1988, the bureaucracy desperately looks for ways of heading off the political revolution of a working class which is now the majority of the population, and which cannot but start from the necessity of liberating itself and all the productive forces whose potential is

stifled by the rule of the bureaucracy.

Marxists have more than once had to learn the great danger contained in a 'confirmation' of their analysis and perspectives.

We know that the contradictions of social life and the class struggle move faster and with many more interconnections than our consciousness can grasp. Consequently, such a 'confirmation' demands redoubled efforts in theory and practice to discover what is new in the situation and to develop the necessary policy and organisation. Our work for the reconstruction of the Fourth International lags behind the demands of the revolution itself.

The WRP is determined to further this work with the greatest sense of urgency, with the building of the Soviet section of the reconstructed Fourth International as a priority task. This will be a principal item at the Special Extended Meeting of the Preparatory Committee in August of this year.

**Rebuild the Fourth International!
For the Political Revolution of the
Soviet working class to defeat the
Stalinist bureaucracy!**

That is the meaning of the story of

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LET

NHS

WE NEED a different type of leadership in the working class movement. The TUC and the Labour Party are directing things on behalf of the Tories. At the same time we are being brainwashed through education, TV and the papers. 50,000 people in London are sleeping on the streets, who, even if they wanted to, cannot vote because they haven't got an address. It has gone beyond voting. We need a revolution. If we don't do something drastic, we will lose everything.

The problem is that, whilst every single thing fought for by the working class is being dismantled by the Tories, the leadership of our union is prepared to let these things go, even when the members vote to put up a fight.

We are being suppressed by our own union. In March, when the hospital workers were taking action, we had a lot of support from other unions, and from within our own union. Now that support has been dropped. Yet things are still getting worse.

For example we are on a bonus scheme in the maternity wards, but now management want to bring in their own porters. They will be getting no bonus, and will be paid £15 a week less than us. This seemed to be the thin end of the wedge. We voted unanimously in the branch for a work-to-rule over staffing levels, yet when it went higher up the union and came down again, our local union leader

wouldn't support it. We are fighting Thatcher and Willis and now seemingly our own union leaders, both nationally and here in Leicester.

A problem is that Leicester is well known in the union, because of our militant attitude on the big London demonstration, when Willis got booed off the platform, and also because, when the national strike had been called, only Leicester and Northampton repented.

The union leaders want to keep having tea and biscuits with Thatcher, and we got in the way.

We're not going to give up, with or without union backing. If we are going to go, we'll go out with a fight. We aren't going to sit and watch the NHS fall apart in front of our eyes.

Tom Smith, NUPE steward
Dave Ward, NUPE member
Leicester Royal Infirmary

Strip Searching

THIS MONTH two cases against strip-searching came to court. The Appeal Court in London on 4 July turned down the action seeking a judicial review of a prison governor's right to strip search prisoners.

Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, two Irish republican women serving life in Durham's H-Wing, brought the action in May 1986 when they were in Brixton prison. During their eleven months on remand they were strip-searched over 800 times, and also endured countless body searches and cell changes.

They are now seeking a writ for damages against the governor and the Secretary of State

for the Home Office.

Next day the County Court at Newbury in Buckinghamshire saw a victory for Stella Mann-Cairns, who was strip-searched by Ministry of Defence police at Greenham Common. She was awarded damages of £2,000 and costs of about £15,000 - the first time damages have been awarded for a victim of strip searching.

Stella, a member of the United Campaign Against Strip Searching set up in February this year, commented:

'It is now important to get other cases to court, as well as publicising Ella and Martina's case. Our campaign, while recognising that Irish women are in particular at risk from strip-searching both in prison and under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, is anxious to offer support to anybody who has suffered a strip search.'

'In particular, black people, for example at customs, are vulnerable to being picked on by the authorities, as are women political activists like myself.'

Answering the argument that stripsearching can be carried out with 'care and consideration', she adds: 'You are naked and vulnerable. It is not as if you are being examined for an illness to cure something. You are being examined to take something away from you - using your body against you.'

United Campaign Against
Strip-Searching
c/o The Association of London
Authorities
36 Old Queen Street
London SW1

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SOUTH AFRICA BULLETIN

NO. 1

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Hands off the South African unions

A **PERNICIOUS** new Labour Relations Bill designed to weaken the position of the South African trade union movement is about to be enacted.

The Bill, an amendment to the Labour Relations Act, will:

- * make strike action more difficult
- * outlaw sympathy strikes and product boycotts
- * weaken workers by encouraging minority unions
- * take away workers' protection against unfair dismissal

One of the most dangerous clauses of the Bill will give a company the right to sue a union for loss of production in the event of an illegal strike.

Political actions such as calling of mass stayaways, and actions with a political dimension, such as sympathy strikes will become illegal under the terms of the new Bill.

At the same time the definition

of a 'legal' strike has been severely limited. This is because some strikes are banned completely while others will require lengthy bureaucratic procedures before they are deemed legal.

The passing of this Bill is a prelude to the attempt to break completely the resistance of the South African working class.

Manpower Minister Pietie du Plessis, launching an attack on the 'radical' unions that wanted to make South African 'un-governable,' said the new Act was not by any means the end of the story.

'We will have to see how it works out in practice. We will have to see if this legislation puts us in a position to accommodate new challenges, new problem situations and new tendencies.'

Members of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) won an average wage increase of 18 per cent last year, higher than the increases of other black workers or white workers. The Bill will obviously be used

to force down real wages and increase the rate of exploitation of the black South African working class.

Even more it is intended to break up the mounting strike struggles that saw a leap from one million hours of production lost in 1983 to nine million lost last year.

The international working class movement has an immediate responsibility to its South African brothers.

This is above all true of the British trade union movement. The new Bill has undoubtedly been based on the experience of Thatcher's anti-union laws.

All the experiences of the fight against the Thatcher government, both negative and positive, must be brought to bear on the struggle against similar legislation in South Africa.

HANDS OFF THE SOUTH AFRICAN UNIONS!

DOWN WITH THE LABOUR RELATIONS BILL!



South African Trades Unionists celebrate May Day.

Make Way for the Working Class

VIVID details have emerged after 26 years about a workers' uprising in the Soviet town of Novochoerkassk, about 20 miles north-west of Rostov-na-Donu and not far from the Black Sea.

According to a report in 'Komsomolets', a Rostov regional newspaper, troops were ordered to fire on an unarmed crowd. Scores of people, including women and children, were shot dead and their bodies were buried in secret graves.

This rising in 1962 began as a protest against steep increases in the prices of milk, eggs, meat and other food.

Some of the 14,000 workers in a factory making electric trains were told by their manager: 'If you haven't got money for meat, then eat sausage rolls.'

That was all it took to provoke a mass walk-out. The workers surged onto the nearby railway, flagged down a passenger train, and chalked on the engine: 'We'll swap Krushchev for meat.'

When unarmed troops arrived from the local barracks they fraternised with the workers, who embraced them and shook hands with them. But when a party official tried to talk to the workers he was howled down.

There were calls for a seizure of power. But a worker named Pyotr Siuda - whose father, an old Bolshevik, had died in prison during

Stalin's purges - spoke against this.

During the night the factory was ringed by tanks. An officer ordered the men back to work, but they refused. Siuda was arrested, whereupon thousands of factory workers marched into town, carrying red flags and portraits of Lenin.

As they filed past two columns of tanks and armed troops, they shouted: 'Make way for the working class.'

The crowd occupied the party headquarters, then made for the police station. Here a soldier threatened a worker with a gun, an officer gave the order to fire, and the worker was shot dead.

An order was given to shoot at the crowds outside the party headquarters. At first the army officer on the spot refused to pass on the order, but firing started all the same.

Those shot included children who had climbed trees to get a better view of the demonstration. A major stepped into a pool of blood in which a dead girl was lying, and people screamed at him: 'You bastard, look where you're standing!' The major then shot himself in the head. The bodies of the many victims were never handed over to their relatives.

Two Politburo members, Mikoyan and Kozlov, arrived in Novochoerkassk. Mikoyan asked for the tanks to be withdrawn; Kozlov was said to be in tears.

Over 100 people were jailed, most of them for ten years or more. Seven workers were sentenced to death. Siuda got 12 years, reduced to six after Krushchev's downfall.

Siuda started to circulate his account of the 1962 Novochoerkassk

events at the beginning of this year. The 'Komsomolets' journalist who reported Siuda's story on 22 June commented: 'It is sickening and bitter for me to write all this up. Under no conditions was it right, I think, to open fire.'

Now there is not one single solitary aspect of this tragic, astonishing, engrossing story that does not provide all of us who are concerned to end Stalinism with abundant food for thought.

The factory boss's arrogant echo of Marie Antoinette (it's a safe bet that *he* didn't have to eat sausage rolls in place of meat); the workers' spontaneous slogans; their fraternising with the troops; their call for the taking of power; Siuda's scared demurrals; the red flags and the portrait of Lenin; unarmed workers defying armed soldiers, to the point where an angry worker grabs the gun that is being poked at him; Kozlov's crocodile tears; the bureaucracy's brutal revenge: here is an almost textbook outline of an embryonic workers' revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The only thing apparently lacking was a strike committee or any comparable form of organisation. But remember that this protest movement was less than 24 hours old when it was suppressed by the same gang that six years earlier had suppressed the Hungarian workers' uprising in the same way.

The day is coming when the call will again be heard on the streets of the USSR: 'Make way for the working class!' And whoever stands in the workers' way will find himself broken by history's wheel.

News shorts

Matches abandoned

Charges against a further 89 people for alleged football hooliganism have been dropped by the Metropolitan Police, it was announced last week. What has led to this, it seems, is that the younger coppers who are assigned to infiltrate soccer crowds are proving less than capable of taking "proper notes".

Obviously they need to become more skilled in the use of Tippex.

No contest

It was no real surprise that the confrontation between Governor Dukakis and Senator Jackson never happened. The necessity to present some appearance of unity to the gullible Democratic Party supporters was more important, and the reverend Jesse finally remembered his place. Jackson seemed to be talking in advance of settling for being an honest loser, although whether he was hinting at divine intervention or as the victim of corrupt politics was not clear.

Him angry?

Neil Kinnock - the latest Briton to distinguish himself with loutish behaviour abroad - claims he wasn't angry when wrong-footed by the Zimbabwean lance-corporal at the end of his tour of southern Africa front-line states last week.

He even went so far as to express his sympathy for "soldiers of lower ranks" who found themselves "under pressure". This despite reports to the contrary that Kinnock was overheard threatening trouble when he and Glenys were so unceremoniously detained by the guard.

Send in the clowns

And, as if the Dukakis-Jackson-Bentsen act was not enough to try to keep them sweet in Atlanta, who else should be seen patching up their differences but Jimmy Carter and Edward Kennedy.

It was Kennedy, of course, who has always been blamed for Carter losing out to Reagan in 1984.

Keep taking the tablets

A request for transfer to another GP in your area could find you on an "informal" blacklist, according to an item in the annual report by the Association of Community Health Councils. If you are continually calling out your doctor or express some criticism of him/her, you may be marked down as 'troublesome' and another doctor may refuse to take you on.

Job Centres

A reduction in JobCentres would not lead to staff cuts, a Department of Employment spokesman has said, because many offices are presently understaffed. If you believe the official version, the cut-back in the number of such centres as well as unemployment benefit offices comes as a result of falling dole queues. But another view is that they are being closed in favour of private employment agencies.

'It is Necessary to Drive the Bureaucracy and Aristocracy out of the Soviets' - Trotsky

The following article was part of the discussion that preceded the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in 1938. Written by Leon Trotsky in July 1938, it takes up the question of the relationship of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the workers' councils or soviets that appeared in the 1905 revolution and re-appeared in 1917. The issues raised by Trotsky have immediate relevance to the present situation where demands, some of them from within the bureaucracy itself, for 'All Power to the Soviets' have been raised.

ON THE subject of the slogan which appears at the head of this article I have received some critical remarks which are of a general interest and therefore merit an answer not in a private letter but in an article.

Conflicts

First of all let us cite the objections. The demand to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets disregards, in the words of my correspondent, the sharp social conflicts going on within the bureaucracy and aristocracy - sections of which will go over to the camp of the proletariat as stated in another section of the same thesis (the draft programme).

The demand (to drive out the bureaucracy...) establishes an incorrect ('ill defined') basis for disenfranchisement of tens of millions - including the skilled workers.

Parties

The demand is in contradiction to that section of the thesis which states that the 'democratisation of the soviets is impossible without the *legalisation of soviet parties*. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognise as soviet parties.'

'In any case' continues the author of the letter, 'there do not appear to be any valid political reasons to establish an *a priori* disenfranchisement of social groupings of present day Russian society. Disenfranchisement should be based on political acts of violence of groups or individuals against the new soviet power.'

Finally, the author of the letter points out also that the slogan of 'disenfranchisement' is advanced for the first time, that it would be better to defer the question for the

thoroughgoing consideration subsequent to the international conference.

Conference

Such are the reasons and arguments of my correspondent. Unfortunately I can by no means agree with them. They express a formal, juridical, purely constitutional attitude on a question which must be approached from the revolutionary-political point of view. It is not at all a question of whom the new soviets will deprive of power once they are decisively established; we can calmly leave the elaboration of the new Soviet constitution to the future.

The question is *how to get rid of the Soviet bureaucracy* which oppresses and robs the workers and peasants, leads the conquests of October to ruin, and is the chief obstacle on the road to the international revolution.

Bureaucracy

Of course, in the ranks of the bureaucracy there are sincere and revolutionary elements of the Reiss type. But they are not numerous, and, in any case, they do not determine the political physiognomy of the bureaucracy, which is a centralised, Thermidorean caste crowned by the Bonapartist clique of Stalin.

We may be sure that the more decisive the discontent of the toilers becomes, the deeper will the differentiation within the bureaucracy penetrate. But in order to achieve this we must theoretically comprehend, politically mobilise and organise the *hatred of the masses against the bureaucracy as the ruling caste*.

Soviets

Real soviets of workers and peasants can come forth only in the course of the uprising against the bureaucracy. Such soviets will be bitterly pitted against the military-police apparatus of the bureaucracy. How then can we admit representatives into the soviets from that camp against which the uprising itself is proceeding?

My correspondent - as stated already - considers that the criteria for the bureaucracy and aristocracy are incorrect, 'ill-defined,' since they lead to the *a priori* rejection of tens of millions. Precisely in this lies the central error of the author of the letter.

It is not a question of a *constitutional determination* which is applied on the basis of fixed juridical qualifications, but of the *real self-determination of the struggling camps*. Soviets can arise only in the course of a decisive struggle.

Layers

They will be created by those layers of the toilers who are drawn into the movement. The significance of the soviets consists precisely in the fact that their composition is determined not by formal criteria but by the dynamics of the class struggle. Certain layers of the soviet 'aristocracy' will vacillate between the camp of revolutionary workers and the camp of the bureaucracy.

Whether these layers enter the soviets, and at what period, will depend on the general development of the struggle and on the attitude which different groups of the soviet aristocracy take in this struggle.

Those elements of the bureaucracy and the aristocracy who in the course of the revolution go over to the side of the rebels will certainly find a place for themselves also in the soviets. But this time not as bureaucrats and 'aristocrats', but as participants in the rebellion against the bureaucracy.

The demand to drive out the bureaucracy can in no case be counterposed to the demand for the legalisation of soviet parties. In reality these slogans complement each other. At present the soviets are a decorative appendage to the bureaucracy. Only the driving out of the bureaucracy, which is unthinkable without a revolutionary uprising, can regenerate the struggle of various tendencies and parties within the soviets.

'The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties are soviet parties' - the thesis says. But precisely because of this it is first of all necessary to banish the bureaucracy from the soviets.

Slogan

It is, moreover, untrue that the slogan represents something new in the ranks of the Fourth International. Possibly the formulation is new, but not the content. For a long time we held to the point of view of *reforming* the Soviet regime.

We hoped that by organising the pressure of the advanced elements, the Left Opposition would be able, with the help of the progressive elements of the bureaucracy itself, to reform the Soviet system. This stage could not be skipped.

But the further course of events at any rate disproved the perspective of a peaceful transformation of the party and the soviets. From the position of *reform* we passed to the position of *revolution*, that is of a violent overthrow of the bureaucracy.

Revolution

But how can the bureaucracy be overthrown and simultaneously given a legal place in the organs of the uprising?

If we think through to the very end the revolutionary tasks which face the Soviet worker and peasant, the slogan which stands at the head of this article must be recognised as correct, as self-understood and urgent.

That is why the International conference, in my opinion, should sanction this slogan.

Stalinist horsetraders 'doing business' with Botha

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

NAMIBIANS fighting to free their people from South African rule see nothing good coming out of the US-sponsored talks on Cuban withdrawal from Angola.

All the victories gained on the battlefield by Cuban and Angolan fighters, the long struggle by SWAPO, and the growing movement of the Namibian working class, may yet be thrown away on the altar of Stalinist 'peaceful co-existence.'

A spokesperson of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) said it "would be cruel to raise the hopes" of the people with talk of independence coming soon.

Besides their own military forces in Namibia, the South Africans have created a 24,000-strong South West African Territorial Force (SWATF) to look after their interests.

This has already been used in cross-border operations into Angola alongside South African troops, although not without unrest and desertions among SWATF troops as a result.

The UN Security Council passed resolution 435, calling for South African withdrawal and Namibian independence, ten years ago. The racist Pretoria regime, secure in the knowledge that Britain and the US (both with huge investments in Namibian resources) would veto any effective action, increased its military presence.

Besides repressing the Black working masses in Namibia, the South Africans turned their 'pursuit' of SWAPO guerrillas over the border into large-scale incursions behind the right-wing Unita renegades fighting Angola.

In recent months, the military situation in the region changed. The Cubans have hit the South Africans and their allies hard, and brought down South African aircraft. For the first time, the white regime no longer has the unchallenged air of superiority which enabled it to menace the whole of southern Africa.

This has doubtless persuaded Washington of the urgency of halting the conflict. It has enabled the Cuban delegates at the US-initiated talks to come out saying they think South Africa may be ready for a 'fair and honourable settlement'.

Earlier, they reportedly warned South Africa's General Geldenhuys that if battle broke out in southern Angola there was no guarantee it would not spread into Namibia.

By a strange 'co-incidence', Unita leader Jonas Savimbi has been in London for the past week as guest of right-wing Tory MPs and the well-funded pro-South Africa lobby.

Talk of a 'fair' settlement is false, because like the New York talks themselves it rests on a false equation. Cuban forces are in Angola by invitation, assisting the state which emerged from the defeat of Portuguese colonialism, to defend itself against South African aggression.

South African troops are imperialist intruders against the people of both Namibia and Angola. By linking their promised withdrawal to that of the Cubans, the Reagan administration has in effect sanctified their aggression.

US imperialism will undoubtedly want to

ensure smooth transition to a fake "independence", under which its exploitation of Namibia's mineral wealth and working wealth and working class will be well guarded.

At the same time, it keeps the racist South African regime, as its well-armed 'big stick' to threaten the African masses.

The US imperialists are not the only great power involved, however. Ever since Margaret Thatcher went to Moscow acknowledging 'We can do business', the Foreign Office has been dropping confident hints that "Gorbachev understands British concerns for security in southern Africa."

Jorge Risquet, leading Cuba's delegation at the Angola talks, insisted last week that he was not acting for anyone else, that while the Soviet Union was being kept informed on the talks, it was 'not a party to them'. In fact, Moscow has been as keen as anyone for a deal.

The danger of Stalinist betrayal applies even more so to the revolution in South Africa itself. For the heroism of the black youth and workers to lead to victory, it must be accompanied by the building of a revolutionary leadership in struggle against liberalism and Stalinism, a Trotskyist leadership.

Likewise, workers and young people in Britain mobilising in solidarity with the struggle against the Apartheid state will need to overcome the reformists and Stalinists in the leadership of the Anti-Apartheid and labour movements, who will never let their protests over Botha turn into a threat to Thatcher.

Armenia - another Chernobyl

THE NATIONAL conflict surrounding Soviet Armenia and the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh enclave has become a 'spiritual Chernobyl', top Soviet leaders were warned last week.

While members of the Supreme Soviet's praesidium denounced the workers whose strikes have paralysed Nagorno and the Armenian capital, Yerevan, Daghestan delegate Rasul Gamzatov made the Chernobyl disaster comparison, warning also that 'Today's problems cannot be solved by yesterday's methods.'

The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis has so far led to a bloody pogrom against Armenians in the Azerbaijani industrial city of Sumgait; to clashes between strikers and Soviet troops sent to Yerevan airport; and to the Nagorno-Karabakh region itself taking the unprecedented step of unilaterally declaring its independence from surrounding Azerbaijan.

The problem goes back to the complex conflicts unleashed in the Caucasus by the First World War and the Russian Revolution. At one time, Turkish,

British, Armenian and Azerbaijani troops fought each other over Karabakh, before Soviet power was established over first Azerbaijan and then Armenia.

Stepanakart, the regional capital, takes its name from Stepan Shaumyan, the Armenian Bolshevik leader, one of the famous Baku commissars murdered in 1918 by British-led forces.

When Armenia came under Soviet rule in 1920, the leader of the Baku Soviet, Nariman Narimanov, declared that Karabakh should be united with Soviet Armenia.

The Communist Parties in the Caucasus and the Baku Soviet adopted this policy, but it was overturned by Stalin. As with his rough-handling of Georgia which so angered Lenin, the 'Red Tsar's' bureaucratism showed its brutal proclivity in the flouting of communist principle on the national question.

Today, Karabakh remains over 75 per cent Armenian in population. Supposedly, it enjoys relative autonomy within Azerbaijan, but Armenians say this has never extended to real power nor respect for their national traditions.

Behind the current upsurge of national feeling is popular determination to raise long-standing grievances in the

period of 'glasnost', and widespread discontent in both Karabakh and Armenia itself over social and economic issues.

Both Azerbaijani and Armenian Stalinist bureaucrats doubtless prefer inter-ethnic conflict to the raising of workers' demands and consciousness that would otherwise develop.

When leaders in the Supreme Soviet try to blame agitation by the 'enemies of perestroika', they callously ignore a history of national oppression which is far older than the recent bloodshed in Sumgait.

The Armenian people were the first in this century to experience genocide, at the hands of Turkish forces. When Gorbachev's supporters denounce striking Armenian workers for 'giving ultimatums', they betray their Stalinist lineage as a bureaucratic ruling caste.

That is something that will take more than any mere reforms to sweep away. Workers' 'perestroika' must mean the workers and oppressed nationalities making what use they can of glasnost and reforms - the better to prepare for the removal of the bureaucracy and the resolution of national problems within the framework of workers' democracy.